

SCS SB 16 -- CHILDREN'S VISION EXAMINATIONS

SPONSOR: Scott (Pearce)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing by a vote of 10 to 0.

Beginning July 1, 2008, this substitute requires public school students enrolling in kindergarten or first grade to receive a vision examination from a state licensed optometrist or physician. The State Board of Education in conjunction with the Department of Health and Senior Services will maintain a list of sources to which children who may need vision exams or have been found to be in need of further examination or vision correction may be referred for free or reduced-cost treatment.

Beginning July 1, 2008, and continuing through the 2011-2012 school year, all public schools are required to conduct eye screening exams for each student prior to the completion of the first grade and again before the completion of the third grade. When a student fails an eye screening, the school district must notify the parent or guardian of the results and require the student to receive a complete eye exam from an optometrist or physician. A student will be excused from the eye screening examination if his or her parent or guardian submits an objection to the exam in writing to the appropriate school administrator.

The Children's Vision Commission is established to develop standardized screening tests, reporting forms, appropriate training programs, and a brochure specifying the benefits of ongoing eye care for children and to conduct a four-year pilot project tracking the results of eye screenings. The commission must submit a report to the General Assembly by October 1, 2012, on the results and findings of the study.

The substitute authorizes money from the Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment Program Fund to be used to pay for those additional costs incurred from eye screening which are not covered by existing public insurance if those costs do not exceed \$99,000 per year.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$2,714 in FY 2008, Unknown - Greater than \$599,987 in FY 2009, and Unknown - Greater than \$288,719 in FY 2010. Estimated Cost on Other State Funds of \$0 in FY 2008, Up to \$99,000 in FY 2009, and Up to \$99,000 in FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that many children are falling through the cracks when it comes to eye care. If problems aren't detected and treated at an early age, there can be permanent

damage to a child's eye sight. The bill is vital to providing the early intervention needed.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Scott; Missouri Optometric Association; Missouri Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons; Missouri State Medical Association; and Missouri Academy of Family Physicians.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.