

SCS SB 16 -- CHILDREN'S VISION EXAMINATIONS

Beginning July 1, 2008, this bill requires public school students enrolling in kindergarten or first grade to receive a vision examination from a state licensed optometrist or physician. The Department of Elementary and Secondary 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 2010-2011 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 propose that the student 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 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 guidelines specifying the benefits of ongoing eye care for children and to conduct a pilot project tracking the results of eye screenings. The commission must submit a report to the General Assembly by December 31, 2011, on the results and findings of the study.

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

The provisions regarding the required vision examination will expire June 30, 2012.