SENATE, No. 1032

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator M. TERESA RUIZ
District 29 (Essex)
Senator SHIRLEY K. TURNER
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

SYNOPSIS
Requires young children entering public schools or Head Start Programs for first time to have comprehensive eye examination completed.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
S1032 RUIZ, TURNER

AN ACT concerning the vision of certain children and
supplementing chapter 40 of Title 18A of the New Jersey
Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
of New Jersey:

1. a. The State Board of Education shall require a child age 6
and under who is entering a public preschool, public school, or a
Head Start Program for the first time to have a comprehensive eye
examination completed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist by
January 1 of the child’s initial year of enrollment in the school or
program.

b. The Department of Health shall maintain a list of resources
from which a parent or guardian may obtain a free or reduced price
comprehensive eye examination for a child. The list shall be posted
on the department’s Internet website and updated annually. The
department shall also provide the list annually to each public
preschool, public school, and Head Start Program, and the list shall
be made available by the public preschool, public school, and Head
Start Program to the parents or guardians of all enrolled children.

c. A principal, director, or other person in charge of a public
preschool, public school, or Head Start Program shall collect from
the child’s parent or guardian evidence of the child’s
comprehensive eye examination, as provided by regulation of the
State board.

In the case of a parent or guardian who has not provided
evidence of the child’s comprehensive eye exam, the principal,
director, or other person in charge of a public preschool, public
school, or Head Start Program shall notify the parents or guardians
every three months following the child’s initial enrollment of the
requirement regarding the comprehensive eye examination.

d. A comprehensive eye examination that was performed no
more than one year prior to a child’s initial enrollment in a public
preschool, public school, or Head Start Program shall be deemed to
satisfy the requirement of this section.

e. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and
regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to implement the provisions
of this section.

f. There is hereby created a special fund in the Department of
Education, which shall be entitled the "Comprehensive Eye
Examination Fund." The fund shall be maintained in a separate
account and administered by the commissioner to carry out the
provisions of this section. The fund shall consist of (1) any monies
appropriated by the State for the purposes of the fund; (2) any
monies donated for the purposes of the fund; and (3) all interest and
investment earnings received on monies in the fund. The fund shall
be used to cover the costs of comprehensive eye examinations conducted pursuant to this section, for any uninsured children and children without applicable healthcare coverage.

g. As used in this section, "comprehensive eye examination" means an evaluation that includes a child's history, external and ophthalmoscopic examination, visual acuity, ocular alignment and motility, refraction, and assessment of accommodation and binocular vision, performed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

2. This act shall take effect in the first full school year following the date of enactment.

STATEMENT

This bill directs the State Board of Education to require each child age 6 and under who is entering a public preschool, public school, or a Head Start Program for the first time to have a comprehensive eye examination completed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist by January 1 of the child’s initial year of enrollment in the school or program. The Department of Health will maintain a list of resources from which a parent or guardian may obtain a free or reduced price comprehensive eye examination. The list will be posted on the Department of Health’s website and will be provided to each public preschool, public school, and Head Start Program.

A principal, director, or other person in charge of a public preschool, public school, or Head Start Program must collect from the child’s parent or guardian evidence of the child’s comprehensive eye examination, as provided by regulation of the State board. A comprehensive eye examination that was performed no more than one year prior to a child’s initial enrollment in a public preschool, public school, or Head Start Program will satisfy the requirements under the bill.

Under the bill, a special fund will be created in the Department of Education, to be entitled the "Comprehensive Eye Examination Fund." The fund must be maintained in a separate account and administered by the commissioner to carry out the provisions of the bill. The fund will consist of (1) any monies appropriated by the State for the purposes of the fund; (2) any monies donated for the purposes of the fund; and (3) all interest and investment earnings received on monies in the fund. The fund is to be used to cover the costs of comprehensive eye examinations conducted pursuant to the bill, for any uninsured children and children without applicable healthcare coverage.