

SB 289 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/25, 3/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Permits the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to reimburse approved providers for expenses related to vision screenings. Appropriates \$2 million to Vision Health Account established under ORS 336.212. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Number of school children screened
- Importance of state funding
- Non-profit partnerships
- Value of early screening to detect vision problems
- Number of referrals to eye doctors because of screening
- Per-student cost of screening
- Role of school nurses
- Connection between vision health and educational outcomes

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

A vision screening is an eye test that identifies potential vision health concerns. Under current law, school districts must require students age seven or younger to certify that they have received a vision screening, unless they meet certain exceptions. In practice, many districts and preschool programs offer free vision screenings to their students during school hours to meet this requirement. School-based screenings must be conducted by a school nurse, qualified school staff, or an ODE-approved organization, such as the Oregon Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation or the Elks Preschool Vision Screening Foundation.

In 2017, the legislature passed Senate Bill 187 requiring ODE to reimburse education providers for expenses related to vision screenings, including any expenses related to contracting with outside providers. It appropriated \$1 million to Vision Health Account to reimburse education providers, capping the rate at \$3.20 per student. In the 2017-2018 school year, ODE reimbursed districts a total of \$418,196.

Under current law, ODE may only reimburse an education provider for vision screening expenses. ODE-approved providers, such as the Lions Foundation, must request reimbursement through a school district. Senate Bill 152

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authorizes ODE to directly reimburse all approved screening providers, including foundations. It appropriates \$2 million to the Vision Health Account for this purpose.

PRELIMINARY