

2/2/2021

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Education

I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 222 to provide funding for ODE's School Vision Screening fund.

For the past 20 years, I have worked with the school vision screening program at the Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation. Our foundation, and several other vision care organizations, have been diligently working to identify the tens of thousands of elementary aged students who are in need of vision care. These efforts come from the knowledge that 25% of students have an undiscovered vision issue, some of which are resolved with a pair of eyeglasses, and some of which can result in permanent vision loss and blindness if not identified and treated.

In order to screen students efficiently and effectively, organizations like ours have built screening programs that rely upon digital screening devices that objectively check for multiple vision conditions prevalent in younger children; we've developed extensive data management systems allowing for rapid individual results tracking and reporting; and established teams of trained staff to coordinate mass screening events with schools and districts.

For many years our programs were funded by individual donors and institutional funders. Those resources allowed us to develop our screening methodology and prove its effectiveness but, without additional resources, we could not meet the existing need in Oregon to screen every child.

Then, thanks to the state of Oregon, and this committee, recognizing that need for resources, you were able to unanimously approve funding to reimburse schools for the cost of vision screenings. This allowed us to rapidly expand screening programs to where, pre-Covid, more than 200k children were screened every school year.

Thanks to your support of the ODE School Vision Screening Fund, organizations like ours have been able to improve and increase our vision screening efforts, creating a successful private/public partnership that is cost effective and reliable. For every student needing eye care, it is vital we continue this partnership.

This past year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all of our programs have been minimally operative. Fundraising has been difficult. Resources are scarce, for all of us. Even so, we retained our trained staff and we've used this downtime to adapt our screening methods. Rolling tripods now allow for more than 6 feet of space between the screener and the student, we've implemented additional disinfection protocols, and we've provided personal protective equipment to our entire team. We are actively preparing for students to return to their classrooms and, when they are ready, to work with schools towards providing vision checks for all students in pre-K through eighth grade.

Once again, with your support of SB 222 to continue funding ODE's School Vision Screening Fund, organizations like ours are prepared to provide vision screenings and resources for follow up care to hundreds of thousands of Oregon's young students.

Thank you!



Brenda Anderson  
Finance & Administration Director  
Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation