

The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair
The Honorable John Mizuno, Vice Chair
House of Representative Committee On Health

January 23, 2008

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.B. 2022

Chairs Dr. Green, Vice Chair Mizuno and members of the House Committee on Health:

The Hawaii Optometric Association supports the concept of early identification and intervention of conditions, which if left untreated, can affect a child's cognitive, emotional, neurological, and physical development.

Vision disorders are the leading cause of handicapping conditions in children. According to the organization, Prevent Blindness America, undetected vision problems are common in preschool children, with an estimated prevalence of 5% - 10%. However, fewer than 15 % of all preschool children receive an eye examination and fewer than 22 % of all preschool children receive any type of vision screening.

Among school-age children ages 6-11 years old, an estimated 5.3 million (21.5%) have a vision problem. Rates continue to rise as children get older, with an estimated 24% of 12-17 year olds exhibiting some type of vision problem.

The primary disabling vision disorders found in children are: **Amblyopia** (lazy-eye) 2-5%, **Strabismus** (eye turn) 3-4% and significant **Uncorrected Refractive Errors** (nearsighted, farsighted, astigmatism) 15-20%.

Hawaii is one of only 9 states that does not mandate any school eye exam or provide for any vision screening requirements for children entering either preschool or elementary school. At present in Hawaii, pediatricians, family practice physicians, public health nurses and non-profit volunteers such as the Lions Clubs or Rotary Clubs conduct vision screenings. Methods of vision screening vary widely and may include a variety of vision testing short of a complete eye examination. Essential elements of a vision screening should include testing for amblyopia, strabismus, stereopsis, visual acuity testing and ocular health assessment by direct observation. Finally, for those children who fail the screening, appropriate follow-up that requires a comprehensive eye examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist must be in place.

The American Optometric Association advocates that children should be evaluated, by an eye care provider, for vision and eye health problems at 6 months, at 3 years, upon

entering elementary school and every 2 years thereafter unless the child is at risk (annually or as recommended).

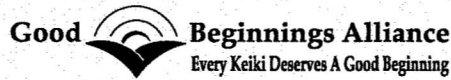
The Hawaii Optometric Association recognizes the importance of early detection, intervention and treatment of vision conditions as an important part of the child's development and success in school. We support, in principle, H.B. 2022.

Reid Saito, O.D.

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President

Hawaii Optometric Association



To: Representative Josh Green, Chair
Representative John Mizuno, Vice Chair
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

From: David Tom, Director, Public Policy

Date: Wednesday, January 23, 2008, 8:00 a.m., Room 329

Subject: HB 2022: Relating to Health

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a statewide public-private initiative for Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure the healthy development and support for the school readiness of all children in Hawaii. We believe all children deserve an early learning opportunity that meets their needs as they grow and develop. We also understand that the settings for these early learning experiences will vary as the child grows and are often dictated by the needs of the child's family.

Good Beginnings Alliance wishes to express its support for HB2022.

A statewide screening initiative for all children in Hawai'i from birth to eight years of age will be a huge benefit for our families with young children. Thus, the recommended advisory committee will help make this much-needed screening a reality and will pay big dividends for years to come.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Contact information:
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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH

RE: HB 2022 -- RELATING TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH.

January 23, 2008

ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Green and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association supports HB 2022 which is in close agreement with a measure passed by the 2006 HSTA State Convention. This measure urged the Department of Education to work with the Department of Health to provide vision and hearing screening as mandated by Hawaii Revised Statutes 321-101.

We believe this bill is needed to ensure students entering any public school in the state are properly screened for vision and hearing problems. Currently there is no program through the Department of Education and the Department of Health that conducts vision or hearing screenings for our public school students. Hawaii is one of only 10 states that does not require vision screening for students entering school.

We believe good vision and hearing is imperative for a child's learning. If a child is unable to clearly see a book, poster, blackboard/whiteboard, or computer screen or clearly hear the teacher or other speakers, it will impede his or her learning ability. These impairments can also lead to frustration and behavior problems which can affect the teacher and the entire class. If vision and hearing problems can be detected early, teachers informed and the problems corrected, accommodations can be made to assure the child has a better opportunity for a quality education.

We urge the committee to pass this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.