



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2901 S.D. 1
RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM

SENATOR DONOVAN M. DELA CRUZ, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Hearing Date: February 20, 2020

Room Number: 211

1 **Fiscal Implications:** There are no fiscal implications to the Department of Health (DOH).

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department **strongly supports** this measure, which is part of the
3 Governor's Administrative Package, to amend Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §321-101 to
4 establish recommended standards for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener
5 training, and data collection and reporting.

6 The DOH recognizes that the early identification of hearing and vision loss, with appropriate
7 follow-up services, is essential for the development of children's language and communication
8 skills needed for learning in school.

9 HRS §321-101 mandates a hearing and vision program for school children to be conducted by
10 the DOH. This program was discontinued in 1995 due to budget reductions and with the
11 assumption that primary care providers will do the hearing and vision screening. The DOH does
12 not have the funding or staff resources to reinstate this program. Currently, a DOH audiologist
13 provides training and consultation to community organizations on hearing and vision screening
14 protocols and tools.

15 Improvement in hearing and vision screening for children is needed. Providers and community
16 programs vary in their protocols and training for screenings and follow-up. Screeners vary in
17 their training and skills for conducting screenings. Hawaii data from the National Survey of
18 Children's Health show that, compared with other states, Hawaii ranks low in rates of vision
19 screening (39th for ages 5-11 years, and 49th for ages 12-17 years). Although newborns receive

1 hearing screening, there is a need to identify children who develop hearing loss after the newborn
2 period due to late onset or progressive hearing loss.

3 The proposed amendment to HRS §321-101 will allow the Department to set recommended
4 standards based on national guidelines and best practices for hearing and vision screening and
5 follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement. A statewide screening
6 protocol will ensure that all organizations performing screening are using tools, screening
7 procedures, and referral criteria based on evidence and best practice.

8 The DOH will use existing staff to support the proposed Hearing and Vision Program. The DOH
9 will convene an advisory committee with professional, state, and community members to assist
10 the DOH in developing recommended protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up,
11 screener training, and data collection and reporting. Training will be provided at no cost to the
12 community organizations.

13 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

LATE

February 19, 2020

TO: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Lauren Moriguchi, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Measure: S.B. No. 2901, S.D. 1 – RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM
Hearing Date: February 20, 2020
Time: 1:00 p.m.
Location: Room 211

Bill Description: Amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

Good afternoon. I am Lauren Moriguchi, Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL is in support of S.B. 2901, S.D. 1.

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the state, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

This bill will affect the hearing and vision screening of young children who may be receiving screening in the schools or community. This will help ensure standards and training are in place to support the early identification of children who may have hearing or vision concerns. For our young children especially during their critical stages of development, early identification and the provision of follow-up support for their families is essential. Serve-and-return interactions between adults and young children are critical to the architecture of the brain, which has lasting impact on children's development and learning. The deprivation of the verbal or non-verbal language (through which these interactions occur) negatively impacts social-emotional competence and cognitive development, in addition to language and literacy skills. Consequently, taking care of our children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing is vital to establishing a strong foundation for the young child, one that his or her future years will be built upon.

We defer to the Department of Health regarding the other merits of this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

LATE

Date: 02/20/2020

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: 211

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2901, SD1 RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM.

Purpose of Bill: Amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement. (SD1)

Department's Position:

The Department of Education (Department) supports SB 2901, SD1, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in our Board of Education approved budget.

In order to enroll in a public school, a child must complete a comprehensive physical exam, which includes vision and hearing screening. Beginning in school year 2017-18 and in accordance with Section 302A-1159, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), all students entering seventh grade must also complete a physical examination within 12 months of the first day of instruction. These policies have helped to strengthen the connection between the child, his or her family, and the medical care home.

School-based hearing and vision screening helps to support students who were lost to follow-up or developed an issue in between visits to their medical care home. Approximately one in four school-aged youth in the United States has some kind of vision problem. Some of the symptoms of visual problems that threaten a student's ability to learn include avoidance of reading, losing place when reading, short attention span, and difficulty remembering what has been read. If left untreated, hearing impairment may negatively impact language and communication skills.

Revision of this measure could increase the number of trained professionals with qualifications to conduct screening, improve the quality of screening, support follow-up of children who do not pass screening, and develop a better surveillance system for hearing and vision screening statewide.

As vision and hearing screening are health issues, we defer to the appropriate agency for comment. This measure includes initiatives supportive of our goals and objectives. The Department is committed to improving equity and increasing access to resources that allow all students to engage in learning. School based hearing and vision screening programs have been found to help with the identification of health conditions that adversely affect educational outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

The Hawai'i State Department of Education is committed to delivering on our promises to students, providing an equitable, excellent, and innovative learning environment in every school to engage and elevate our communities. This is achieved through targeted work around three impact strategies: school design, student voice, and teacher collaboration. Detailed information is available at www.hawaiipublicschools.org.



STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
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February 20, 2020

The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Ways and Means
Thirtieth Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz and Members of the Committees:

SUBJECT: SB 2901 SD1 – Relating to Hearing and Vision Program

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities **STRONGLY SUPPORTS SB 2901 SD1** which amends the hearing and vision program statute to increase the early identification of children with hearing or vision loss, by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

Early identification of hearing and vision loss is imperative in order to provide appropriate follow-up services to a child for the development of the child's language and communication skills. These skills are essential for the child to learn in school.

The Department of Health would have to amend Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §321-101 in order to establish the recommended standards based on national guidelines and best practices for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement. A statewide screening protocol will ensure that all organizations performing screening are using tools, screening procedures, and referral criteria based on evidence and best practice. As such, the Council respectfully defers to the Department of Health for further guidance.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of **SB 2901 SD1**.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

Roger Christian Ede, O.D.
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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair

Senator Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran, Vice Chair

February 20, 2020

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 2901, S.D. 1

Dear Senators Dela Cruz, Keith-Agaran and members of the Committee on Ways and Means,

I am presenting this testimony as an individual, practicing optometrist. I am not representing any agency or organization. I have served in the past on the State of Hawaii Department of Health, Vision Screening Task Force (2014-2016), currently serve on the Sight Committee for District 50 Lions (2010 – present) and serve on the Scientific Advisory Board for Project Vision Hawaii (2015-present).

Good vision is a key to a child's physical development, success in school and overall well-being. We know that 5% to 10% of very young children and about 25% of school age children have a vision related problem that can affect school performance. Studies have found that 35% of school aged children have never seen an eye care professional and only 22% of preschoolers receive some sort of vision screening. Of those children who are referred for a complete eye exam only 15% are seen by an eye care provider.

School vision screenings are not a substitute for a comprehensive eye examination. However, a review of those states that have recently updated their vision screening programs demonstrate that they follow the recommendations of several large organizations devoted to children and their vision. These organizations have **published policy statements** outlining current best, evidence-based practices for school vision screenings. The list of organizations includes: the National Association of School Nurses, the National Center for Children's Eye Health and Vision (Prevent Blindness America), the American Academy of Optometry, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Association of Certified Orthoptists.

School vision screening programs are designed to test healthy children who have no outward signs of an eye or vision problem. Screenings include visual acuity testing and age-appropriate high-tech hand held screening devices to identify children with amblyopia, significant refractive errors, strabismus and even

unusual problems like childhood cataracts. These screenings can be conducted by school nurses and lay volunteer organizations that have been certified to conduct such screenings

S.B. 2901, S.D.-1 allows the Department of Health to implement all the essential elements of a sound vision screening program:

- Current evidence-based, age appropriate testing protocols with annual reviews
- Training and certification of screeners
- Data collection and analysis
- Tracking and follow up of referrals

Please support the passage of this important public health measure.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger Christian Ede".

Roger Christian Ede, O.D.