

Testimony before the Senate Education Committee
In opposition to
HB2346 - Relating to standards for school-administered vision screenings.
by Jill Freisberg, RN – School Nurse
March 10th, 2020

Madame Chair, Members of the committee:

Thank you all for the opportunity to offer testimony related to Vision Screening bill HB2346. This legislation was first brought to my attention by an individual who was advocating for the passage of this bill, and who even instructed school nurses that the new requirements were already in effect in Kansas. The individual was affiliated with Good-Lite Company & School Health, which trains and certifies school nurses. Good-Lite sells the products and training that schools would be required to have to meet the “evidence based” requirements of this regulation. According to their representative, districts like ours, who have been very successfully utilizing instrument based screening tools, would need to purchase new items and provide additional training in order to meet the new guidelines. If the Good-Lite representative’s interpretation of HB2346 was incorrect, and the intent of HB2346 would not be to eliminate the use of instrument based screening tools, such as the Welch Allyn Spot Vision Screener, or even the instruments such as Kansas DMV use for their vision testing, then I would recommend amending HB2346 to add language specifically allowing these instruments.

Switching to the minimum requirements currently included in HB2346 would increase costs to our school district, while reducing the screening benefit to our students. I have many concerns about what this would mean for the vision health of our students, even if the new requirements do meet the narrow definition of being “evidence-based practice.” This new minimum requirement for 6 & over would be critical line screening only. To pass this, a student must only correctly identify 3 out of 5 symbols with each eye at 20/32. The new testing would also require more time and cooperation from each student.

The Spot screener we are fortunate to borrow from our local Lion's Club screens for much more, including near vision, which is so important for reading & many other concerns. I've personally seen more students getting glasses who need them, and have noticed less false referrals over my 8+ years working in the schools. It allows the screening personnel to perform vision screenings quickly, without touching the student or causing any discomfort, and can even be used for students who are non-verbal or unable to actively participate in the screening process. According to Welch Allyn, the Spot Vision Screener "accurately* detects the potential indication of these common vision problems: Myopia (nearsightedness), Hyperopia (farsightedness), Astigmatism (blurred vision), Anisometropia (unequal refractive power), Strabismus (eye misalignment), Anisocoria (unequal pupil size). *Accuracy refers to the sensitivity and specificity of the screening referral recommendation." (1)

While I am sure that other districts have had good experiences with other screening tools that might also be eliminated by HB2346, my experience is with the Spot Vision Screener. I don't expect you to take my word or the manufacturer's word for it, so I would also direct you to a study published in the Journal of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, that found, "the Spot provided good specificity and sensitivity in detecting amblyopia risk factors according 2013 AAPOS criteria.." (2)

My hope is to allow more options for our students and nurses rather than limiting them. I also hope to avoid new unfunded mandates, such as this, for our schools. I urge you to reject HB2346, or to amend it to include language that would specifically continue to allow for these successful screening tools that districts are currently using. I thank the committee for their time and attention, and I would be happy to discuss this further and refer you to other studies on this matter.

(1) <https://www.welchallyn.com/content/welchallyn/emeai/in/products/categories/physical-exam/eye-exam/vision-screeners/spot-vision-screener.html>

(2) Peterseim, M. M., Papa, C. E., Wilson, M. E., Davidson, J. D., Shtessel, M., Husain, M., ... Trivedi, R. (2014). The effectiveness of the Spot Vision Screener in detecting amblyopia risk factors. Journal of AAPOS : the official publication of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, 18(6), 539–542. doi:10.1016/j.jaapos.2014.07.176 accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4507562/>