

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6463

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2000

Title: An act relating to health screening in schools.

Brief Description: Providing for early vision and hearing screening.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Goings, Eide, Patterson, Kline and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/17/2000, 1/26/2000 [DP].
Passed Senate, 2/9/2000, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Eide, Vice Chair; Bauer, Brown, Finkbeiner, Goings, Kohl-Welles, Rasmussen and Swecker.

Staff: Vanessa Power (786-7448)

Background: Current law requires early screening of vision and hearing in Washington schools. Students are screened in grades kindergarten, one, two, three, five, and seven for vision and hearing acuity.

Early detection of vision and hearing problems in children corrects problems early, prevents further damage, and minimizes public health and educational costs of sight and hearing disorders. Late diagnosis of vision problems may result in academic difficulties or blindness. Late diagnosis of hearing impairment may result in delays in speech and language development. Nationally, nearly 25 percent of school-age children have some type of vision problem, and 2 percent of children have a permanent hearing impairment.

Summary of Bill: School boards may offer visual and/or hearing screening to pre-school age children living in the school district. Expanding screening to pre-school age children is discretionary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Early vision and hearing screenings are cost-effective in treating and preventing future problems. This legislation is permissive but early screenings are necessary

and should be required. Current screening is good but additional types of eye exams would lead to better diagnosis.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Steve Shaffer, Washington Association of Optometric Physicians; Marlene Inverson, Washington Association of Optometric Physicians; Doreen Garcia, State Board of Health.