

# SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 148

SPONSOR: Senator Cowin

SUBJECT: School Entry Health and Vision Exams

DATE: March 18, 1999

REVISED: 3/ 22 /99 \_\_\_\_\_

|    | ANALYST       | STAFF DIRECTOR   | REFERENCE | ACTION                    |
|----|---------------|------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1. | <u>Harkey</u> | <u>O'Farrell</u> | <u>ED</u> | <u>Favorable/2 amend.</u> |
| 2. | _____         | _____            | _____     | _____                     |
| 3. | _____         | _____            | _____     | _____                     |
| 4. | _____         | _____            | _____     | _____                     |
| 5. | _____         | _____            | _____     | _____                     |

## I. Summary:

This bill requires each child entering a public or nonpublic school to present a certification of a school entry vision examination and analysis performed within one year prior to enrollment in school. The school board of each district, and the governing authority of each nonpublic school, may establish a policy which permits a student up to 120 days to present a certification of a school-entry comprehensive vision examination and analysis. Any child must be exempt from the required examinations upon written request of the parent or guardian stating objections to the examinations on religious grounds.

The bill deletes the Department of Education's authority to make rules for school entry health examinations.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 1999.

This bill substantially amends s. 232.0315, Florida Statutes.

## II. Present Situation:

Section 232.0315, F.S., requires a parent or guardian to submit at the time of enrollment a certification of a school-entry health examination performed within one year prior to enrollment in school and a certification of immunization for the prevention of those communicable diseases for which immunization is required by the Department of Health. Exemptions from these two requirements are provided upon written request of the parent or guardian stating conflicts with his or her religious beliefs. Other exemptions for the certification of immunization are provided based on medical reasons.

Certification of a school-entry health examination is provided on standard forms that are printed and distributed by the Department of Health. Health exams are documented on Form 3040 and

immunizations are documented on Form 680. The health examination and immunization certifications are completed by the medical providers who include Medicaid providers.

Under s. 381.0056, F.S., each county health department in collaboration with the district school board, must develop a health services plan which shall include, but not be limited to, provisions for health appraisal, nutrition assessment, vision and hearing screening, and growth and development screening. Section 10D-84.014, F.A.C., requires the school health services plan to include an initial school entry health examination.

The Department of Health estimates that 200,000 children will enter Florida schools for the first time in 1999. Following the routine school vision screening exam, approximately 3-5 percent of the children (a maximum of 10,000 children) will be referred to medical providers for a comprehensive vision examination. This comprehensive examination is covered by private insurance plans and publicly subsidized insurance plans only if there is a documented visual problem to justify the referral. Without documentation of a visual problem, the cost of the exam would be borne by the family.

Currently there are 170 state-wide programs which could be used to provide or support vision examinations for children. These include such programs as Medicaid, KidCare, Prevent Blindness, Jeppesen VisionQuest, HMO's, Enriching Youth's Eyes for Success (EYES), Florida Healthy Kids. There are local civic organizations that may collaborate with the school districts in providing support for comprehensive vision examinations.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This bill requires each child to present a certification of school-entry comprehensive vision examination and analysis upon initial entrance into a public or nonpublic school. The school board of each district, and the governing authority of each nonpublic school, may establish a policy which permits a student up to 120 days to present a certification of a school-entry comprehensive vision examination and analysis. If a school board establishes this policy, it must include provisions in the local school health services plan to assist students in obtaining the vision examinations. Any child must be exempt from the examinations requirements upon written request of the parent or guardian stating objections to the examinations on religious grounds.

The bill deletes the Department of Education's authority to make rules to govern medical examinations performed under s. 232.0315, F.S. This rule-making authority should not be deleted.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

#### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

According to the Department of Health, the average cost of a child's comprehensive eye exam is \$53 in Tallahassee, with a price ranging from \$43 to \$100. Medicaid will reimburse \$45 for a comprehensive vision examination, but only if a child is referred for service by a physician as the result of a Children Healthy Check Up screening. Given these price estimates, the annual cost of compliance with this bill would range from \$8.6 million to \$20 million. However, there are numerous voluntary organizations which would likely provide these services at a reduced price or for free. The proportion of this cost which will be paid by the parents, the local school district, the health department, private insurance, or a public insurance program is indeterminate.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the Department of Health, this bill will result in increased cost to the department of \$7,650 for FY 1999-2000 and \$4,378 in FY 2000-2001. The start-up costs for the first year include development, printing, and distribution of the certification form and instructional materials and training of local school district and health department staff.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The bill deletes the Department of Education's authority to make rules for the school -entry health exams. This authority should not be deleted.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Amendments:**

## #1 by Education

Instead of requiring a comprehensive vision exam for every child entering school for the first time, the amendment requires each child to present certification of having passed a school entry vision screening or of having taken a comprehensive vision examination and analysis after failing a vision screening.

## # 2 by Education

Reinstates the rule-making authority of the Department of Education and requires the concurrence of the Department of Health in the formulation of rules governing school-entry health exams.

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This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.

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