A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAI'I:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the early identification of hearing and vision loss, with appropriate follow-up services, is critical for the development of children's language and communication skills needed for learning in school.

The legislature finds that a hearing and vision program for school children is mandated by section 321-101, Hawaii Revised Statutes, which program operated from 1978 in the department of health and ended in 1995 due to budget reductions with the assumption that primary care providers would provide the hearing and vision screening. The department currently provides consultation and training on hearing and vision screening protocols and tools.

The legislature further finds that improvement in hearing and vision screening for children is needed. Currently, hearing and vision screenings are conducted by primary care providers and community programs. However, providers and programs vary regarding protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-
up; screeners vary in their training and skills for conducting screenings; and there is no uniform data collection for quality improvement.

Hawaii data indicate the need to improve vision screening. The National Survey of Children's Health (2016-2017) shows that the Hawaii vision screening rate for children age 6-11 years (84.0%) ranked low at 39 of 50 states. The Hawaii vision screening rate for youth age 12-17 years (76.4%) ranked very low at 49 of 50 states.

The Hawaii newborn hearing screening program data show a hearing loss rate of 3.5 per 1000 infants (2017). However, there is a need to continue hearing screening beyond the newborn period, as national data show that the hearing loss rate increases to about 6 per 1000 children by age 6 years, due to congenital hearing loss that was not identified at birth or late onset or progressive hearing loss.

The purpose of this Act is 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 and reporting.
SECTION 2. Chapter 321, part IX, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"PART IX. [SYSTEMATIC] HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM


(a) There is established a [systematic] hearing and vision program for children to be conducted by the department of health. The purpose of the program shall be to:

1) Detect and identify hearing and vision deficiencies in school children, and

2) Recommend to their parents or guardians the need for appropriate evaluation of children who have hearing or vision deficiencies, or both, and follow-up and track completed evaluations, including diagnostic and treatment information] increase the early identification of hearing or vision loss in children, by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection for quality improvement.

(b) The department shall set recommended standards for:

1) Protocol for evidence-based hearing and vision screening, including ages or grades for screening;

screening tools, instruments, and passing and referral
criteria for screening that are based on national
guidelines and best practices; and referrals, tracking
of referrals, and follow-up of children who do not
pass screening;

(2) Training, certification, and qualifications of
personnel who conduct hearing and vision screening,
other than those who are licensed health care
professionals acting within their legal scope of
practice; and

(3) Data collection and reporting on hearing and vision
screening, referral, and follow-up.

Within available resources, the program shall
include:

(1) Consultation with students, parents, and health and
education personnel about treatment and rehabilitation
of hearing and vision deficiencies; and

(2) Education of students, health and education personnel,
and the general public about preserving and caring for
hearing and vision and about preventing hearing and
vision deficiencies.

The departments of health and education, in
cooperation with each other, may conduct classes and lectures in
hearing and vision conservation and prevention of hearing loss and blindness for teachers, public health nurses, and others engaged in similar work. The departments shall also cooperate with public and private organizations and societies to educate the public in the importance of hearing and vision conservation:] consultation with and education of students, parents, and health and education personnel about hearing and vision screening, treatment, and services."

SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

INTRODUCED BY: [Signature]

BY REQUEST
Report Title:
Hearing and Vision Program; Hearing Screening; Vision Screening

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.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.
DEPARTMENT: Health

TITLE: A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this proposal is to increase the early identification of hearing or vision loss in children by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection and reporting.


JUSTIFICATION: The early identification of hearing and vision loss, with appropriate follow-up services, is critical for the development of children's language and communication skills needed for learning in school.

A hearing and vision program for school children is mandated by section 321-101, HRS. This program was established in 1978 in the Department of Health, but its school services ended in 1995 due to budget reductions and with the assumption that primary care providers will do the hearing and vision screening.

Improvement in hearing and vision screening for children is needed. Currently, hearing and vision screenings are conducted by primary care providers and community programs. However, providers and programs vary regarding protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up; screeners vary in their training and skills for conducting screenings; and there is no uniform data collection for quality improvement. Available data show that Hawaii ranks low in rates of vision
screening for children age 6-17 years, and that there is a need to identify children who develop hearing loss after the newborn period.

_Impact on the public:_ Improving hearing and vision screening services will improve the early identification of children who have hearing or vision loss.

The early identification of hearing and vision loss, with appropriate follow-up services, will support children's development of language and communication skills needed for learning in school.

_Impact on the department and other agencies:_ The Department of Health will work with the Department of Education and professional and community organizations on establishing recommended standards for hearing and vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection and reporting.

GENERAL FUND: None.

OTHER FUNDS: None.

PPBS PROGRAM DESIGNATION: HTH-560.

OTHER AFFECTED AGENCIES: Department of Education.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon approval.