

---

## A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

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

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

12           Furthermore, improvement in hearing and vision screening  
13 for children is needed. Currently, hearing and vision  
14 screenings are conducted by primary care providers and community  
15 programs. However, providers and programs vary regarding  
16 protocols for hearing and vision screening and follow-up;  
17 screeners vary in their training and skills for conducting

# H.B. NO. 987

1 screenings; and there is no uniform data collection for quality  
2 improvement.

3 Hawaii data indicate the need to improve vision screening,  
4 especially for younger ages. The National Survey of Children's  
5 Health shows that the Hawaii vision screening rate of 33.2 per  
6 cent for children ages zero to five years ranked low at forty-  
7 four out of fifty states. The Hawaii vision screening rate of  
8 76.8 per cent for children ages six to eleven years and 76.4 per  
9 cent for youth ages twelve to seventeen years were both close to  
10 the national average.

11 The Hawaii newborn hearing screening program data show a  
12 hearing loss rate of 4.5 per thousand infants. However, there  
13 is a need to continue hearing screening beyond the newborn  
14 period, as national data show that the hearing loss rate  
15 increases to about six per one thousand children by age six, due  
16 to congenital hearing loss that was not identified at birth or  
17 late onset or progressive hearing loss.

18 The purpose of this Act is to increase the early  
19 identification of children with hearing or vision loss, by  
20 establishing consistent protocols for hearing and vision  
21 screening and follow-up, screener training, and data collection  
22 and reporting.

H.B. NO. 987

1 SECTION 2. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
2 amended by amending part IX to read as follows:

3 "PART IX. [~~SYSTEMATIC~~] HEARING AND VISION PROGRAM

4 §321-101 [~~Systematic hearing~~] Hearing and vision program.

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

8 ~~(1) Detect and identify hearing and vision deficiencies in~~  
9 ~~school children; and~~

10 ~~(2) Recommend to their parents or guardians the need for~~  
11 ~~appropriate evaluation of children who have hearing or~~  
12 ~~vision deficiencies, or both, and follow-up and track~~  
13 ~~completed evaluations, including diagnostic and~~  
14 ~~treatment information.]~~

15 increase the early identification of hearing or vision loss in  
16 children by establishing consistent protocols for hearing and  
17 vision screening and follow-up, screener training, and data  
18 collection for quality improvement.

19 (b) The department shall set recommended standards for:

20 (1) Protocol for evidence-based hearing and vision  
21 screening, including ages or grades for screening;  
22 screening tools, instruments, and passing and referral

H.B. NO. 987

1 criteria for screening that are based on national  
2 guidelines and best practices; and referrals, tracking  
3 of referrals, and follow-up of children who do not  
4 pass screening;

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

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

12 [~~b~~] (c) Within available resources, the program shall  
13 include[+]

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

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

21 ~~(c) The departments of health and education, in~~  
22 ~~cooperation with each other, may conduct classes and lectures in~~

H.B. NO. 987

1 ~~hearing and vision conservation and prevention of hearing loss~~  
2 ~~and blindness for teachers, public health nurses, and others~~  
3 ~~engaged in similar work. The departments shall also cooperate~~  
4 ~~with public and private organizations and societies to educate~~  
5 ~~the public in the importance of hearing and vision~~  
6 ~~conservation.] consultation with, and education of students,~~  
7 ~~parents, and health and education personnel about hearing and~~  
8 ~~vision screening, treatment, and services."~~

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

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

12

13

INTRODUCED BY: 

14

BY REQUEST

JAN 25 2021

# H.B. NO. 987

**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.*

JUSTIFICATION SHEET

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.

MEANS: Amend section 321-101, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

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 would 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. Hawaii data shows the need for improved vision screening, especially for

younger ages, 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.