

A JOINT MEMORIAL  
TO DEVELOP WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE EYE  
EXAMINATION HEALTH CERTIFICATE FOR CHILDREN ENTERING  
KINDERGARTEN OR FIRST GRADE.

WHEREAS, eighty percent of a child's learning occurs through the visual system; and

WHEREAS, according to the American optometric association, sixteen percent of all children suffer from inadequate visual skills and up to ninety-four percent of children with reading problems have reduced visual skills; and

WHEREAS, up to one in four children have some form of vision problem that may prevent them from succeeding in school; and

WHEREAS, these vision problems may interfere with a child's ability to learn, contribute to disciplinary problems in school and be mistaken or misdiagnosed as a learning disability; and

WHEREAS, although vision is critical to learning, most children are not aware that they have a vision problem; and

WHEREAS, most parents think the vision screening tests now required in New Mexico schools are complete eye examinations; and

WHEREAS, the current required vision screening tests in New Mexico schools miss a third of major vision problems; and

WHEREAS, most school dropouts have never had an eye examination; and

WHEREAS, in Kentucky, which requires kindergarten-age children to have a comprehensive eye examination before entering public school, a study found that one in seven children needed vision correction; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately one hundred seventy-three thousand students in New Mexico between the ages of five and eighteen and about twenty-seven thousand of them are kindergartners; and

WHEREAS, all children on medicaid are entitled to an annual eye examination, and many private insurance policies cover full annual eye examinations for children; and

WHEREAS, despite availability of coverage for eye examinations, there is limited access to optometrists and ophthalmologists in rural New Mexico;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of health, in cooperation with the public education department, be requested to develop ways and means to implement a comprehensive eye examination health certificate for all children entering kindergarten or first grade; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, for the purposes of this study, a "comprehensive eye examination" means a complete examination of the eye and human vision system, including an

evaluation of visual acuity at various distances, alignment and ocular mobility, binocular fusion abnormalities, actual refractive error, color vision abnormalities, intraocular pressure, as medically appropriate, and overall ocular health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study examine current requirements for eye examinations in public schools in New Mexico and compare the scope of these examinations to the standard of a comprehensive eye examination as defined in this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study consider the availability of optometrists and ophthalmologists in New Mexico to conduct comprehensive eye examinations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this study ascertain the potential cost for and benefits of a comprehensive eye examination for children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings of this study be presented to the interim legislative health and human services committee at its October 2005 meeting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of health and the secretary of public education.