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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 6899

BILL NUMBER: SB 553

SUBJECT: Vision Testing.

FIRST AUTHOR: Sen. Becker

FIRST SPONSOR:

FUNDS AFFECTED: **GENERAL**
 DEDICATED
 FEDERAL

NOTE PREPARED: Jan 24, 2013

BILL AMENDED:

BILL STATUS: CR Adopted - 1st House

IMPACT: State & Local

Summary of Legislation: This bill has the following provisions:

Vision Tests: This bill defines "vision screening" for the testing of certain students. It specifies that modified clinical technique vision tests for students must be performed by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist. It sets forth standards for vision tests.

Reporting Requirements: The bill modifies reporting requirements for the results of vision tests and waivers of vision tests.

Effective Date: July 1, 2013.

Explanation of State Expenditures: *Reporting Requirements:* Under current law, the Department of Education (DOE) had to report to the Legislative Council the data submitted to it by the school corporations in 2010 only. Under this bill, the data would have to be compiled and submitted annually. The data would also have to include the number of school corporations that applied for a waiver and their names, the number of waivers approved and denied, and the reason for the approval or denial. The DOE should be able to accomplish this task within existing resources.

Explanation of State Revenues:

Explanation of Local Expenditures: *Summary:*

(1) Reporting Requirements: Schools and school corporations should be able to forward the required data to DOE within existing staffing and resource levels.

(2) Vision Tests: The fiscal impact would depend on local action. Under this bill, approximately 82,000 additional students statewide (5th graders) would be given an annual exam, which would be a roughly 35% increase. This could result in increased costs for those school corporations that have a contract with a local health facility. Ultimately, the source of funds and resources required to satisfy the requirements of this bill would depend on legislative and administrative actions.

In the majority of schools, vision testing is accomplished by the school nurse with help from volunteer organizations (e.g. Lions's Club) and local optometrists. Some schools may get this service free of charge from the local health department. Other schools may depend on volunteer parents to assist or contract the service to a local hospital. Some large school districts (e.g. Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS); Fort Wayne Community Schools) as well as some smaller school districts (e.g. Eminence) currently conduct vision testing for 5th grade students. Some schools test every new student regardless of grade level. IPS reports that approximately 39% of their 5th graders who were tested failed the test.

According to DOE, the vision equipment needed for the required screenings costs about \$1,000, plus the time of the school personnel to organize, conduct, and record the results for the vision screening. Once the screening has been done, letters are typically sent to parents of those students who failed the testing. The vision equipment is sometimes bought per individual school, per school corporation, or borrowed/shared from a local health resource.

Additional Information:

Vision Tests: Under current law, a school corporation is responsible for conducting an annual visual exam on all students entering kindergarten or 1st grade, 3rd grade, and 8th grade, and all other students suspected of having a visual defect. Unless granted a waiver by the State Superintendent, schools must use the modified clinical technique (MCT) when examining students entering kindergarten or 1st grade.

This bill expands vision testing to students entering 5th grade. It also specifies the type of vision charts (Snellen chart; Sloan letters; HOTV; LEA symbol optotypes) that the examiner may use for 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade students (hereafter referred to as "vision screening"). These charts would also be used for examining students in kindergarten/1st grade in place of the MCT testing if the corporation has been granted a waiver.

Reporting Requirements: The bill also changes reporting requirements for the schools and school corporations. The current statute requires each school to report to the school corporation's governing body and superintendent the number of students tested, the number who passed, and the number who failed or were referred for further testing. The corporation, in turn, for each of its schools, forwards to DOE information on whether the tests were conducted, the reason for not doing so if the test were not conducted, and the number of students tested.

Under this bill, the reported data would be further disaggregated into: (1) number of students tested by grade; number of students by grade who were tested using the MCT; (2) number of students by grade who were tested using vision screening; (3) the type of test used for each grade; (4) the number of students by grade who passed a test; and (5) the number who failed a test or were referred for further testing.

Explanation of Local Revenues:

State Agencies Affected: Department of Education

Local Agencies Affected: School Corporations

Information Sources: Rae Wallis, Indianapolis Public Schools, 317-226-4406; Various school corporations.

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