



Testimony for HB 2992

Executive Summary: HB 2992 is a critical step toward ensuring that Oregon students receive the vision care they need to succeed in school. Many children struggle with undiagnosed vision problems, impacting their ability to learn and perform academically. This bill removes financial barriers and strengthens efforts to connect students with eye care providers, ensuring they receive comprehensive exams and corrective lenses when needed. By investing in these services, we are investing in student success, attendance, and long-term academic achievement.

Subject: Support for HB 2992 - Vision Exams and Prescription Glasses for Students from Low-Income Families

Date: February 3, 2025

Presented by: Doug Thompson, CEO, Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation (OLSHF)

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Diehl, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Doug Thompson, and I serve as the CEO of the Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation (OLSHF). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2992, which will provide critical vision exams and prescription glasses to students from low-income families.

Each year, OLSHF conducts vision screenings for approximately 200,000 students in Oregon public schools. About 15% of these children are recommended for additional evaluation, yet many encounter difficulties in accessing the necessary eye exams and prescription lenses. A vision screening is the first step, but students need a clear path to receiving care. HB 2992 helps ensure that once a potential vision issue is identified, students receive the follow-up they need to stay on track in school.

Why This Matters:

- **Clear vision improves learning.** Up to 80% of classroom learning is visual. Without glasses, students struggle to read, participate, and focus. Studies have found that uncorrected vision problems can reduce reading proficiency and cause children to fall behind in core subjects like math and reading.
- **Screenings alone are not enough.** A preliminary evaluation can highlight potential eyesight issues, but a full examination, offering the most complete review of ocular health, is required to understand the entirety of a child's visual challenges. While school-based vision screenings are crucial in identifying which students need proper follow-up, research shows that without additional support—such as what HB 2992 could provide—many young students do not get the care they need.
- **Barriers exist.** Cost and provider availability keep too many children from receiving care. Families often do not have the ability to navigate these barriers without additional support from programs that provide access to follow-up care, ensuring students connect with local eye care professionals who can assess and address their vision needs.

What HB 2992 Does:

- **Connects students with vision care providers** who can conduct exams and provide glasses, ensuring they receive the full scope of care they need to succeed in school.

Our mission is to screen, treat, save and restore sight and hearing for those in need in partnership with Lions Clubs.

1010 NW 22nd Avenue #144, Portland, OR 97210 | (503) 413-7399 | Info@OLSHF.org | www.OLSHF.org



- **Supports vision programs** that help students access care so students don't fall through the cracks after screenings, ensuring they reach local providers who can assess and correct their vision needs.
- **Removes financial barriers** by ensuring exams and glasses are provided at no cost to eligible students.
- **Uses resources efficiently** by leveraging Medicaid, CHIP, and other federal funding to make the most of existing healthcare resources.
- **Recognizes the importance of infrastructure and capacity** in ensuring students receive timely care. Providing programs with the resources to effectively assist students will enhance the reach and benefits of HB 2992's proposed services.

Why It's Important:

- **Better student outcomes.** Addressing vision problems early means improved reading skills, better engagement, and higher achievement. Students with clear vision participate more in class, complete assignments with greater accuracy, and perform better on standardized tests.
- **Improved attendance and graduation rates.** Clear vision reduces academic struggles, keeping students in school and on track. Schools that implement strong vision support programs see improved attendance rates, which is directly tied to better graduation rates.
- **Ensuring program sustainability.** Expanding access to vision care requires well-supported programs that can effectively connect students with services. Programs that support students from screening through treatment need the flexibility to meet increased demand and sustain high-quality service delivery.

HB 2992 is a Smart Investment This bill ensures students get the vision care they need to succeed. By supporting initiatives that strengthen coordination between schools and eye care providers, it ensures students transition from vision screenings to receiving corrective care. Initiatives that guide children from initial identification to obtaining necessary eye care are vital to preventing gaps in treatment. Ensuring that resources are available to sustain and expand existing programs will maximize the effectiveness of HB 2992.

For many children, the only obstacle between them and success in school is a simple pair of glasses. HB 2992 helps remove that obstacle and gives more Oregon students the chance to thrive.

I respectfully urge the committee to advance HB 2992, ensuring more Oregon students receive the vision care they need to thrive in school and beyond. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,



Doug Thompson
CEO

Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation

DougT@OLSHF.org

Our mission is to screen, treat, save and restore sight and hearing for those in need in partnership with Lions Clubs.

1010 NW 22nd Avenue #144, Portland, OR 97210 | (503) 413-7399 | Info@OLSHF.org | www.OLSHF.org