



**VISION IMPACT
INSTITUTE**

Giving Vision a Voice®

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Senator T. Ruiz
Members of the Senate Education Committee
New Jersey Legislature
Trenton, NJ

On behalf of the [Vision Impact Institute](#) and the [Kids See: Success Initiative](#), I write to provide comments in support of **S1032** requiring eye exams for children entering Kindergarten and Head Start Programs.

The Vision Impact Institute is a global non-profit organization that raises awareness about the importance of vision correction and protection to make good vision a global priority. More than **12 million children** in the U.S. suffer from vision problems that may contribute to poor academic performance. We agree that up to 80% of learning occurs through the eyes, yet many parents unknowingly put their children at risk by not providing them with a proper vision exam before entering school or by not following up after failing vision screenings. Vision screenings alone are not appropriate, and **one in five** preschool children continue to have a vision problem that cannot be detected through simple vision screenings. Alarming, according to recent research, this number is expected to increase to **26% by 2060**.

Traditional school vision screenings focus on distance visual acuity but not on how well the eyes focus up close or work together. When problems are identified and addressed early through a comprehensive eye exam, children can receive the proper vision care they need to succeed in the classroom. Because eye and vision problems such as strabismus, amblyopia, and significant refractive error in children could go undetected with the recommended vision screenings, these may result in late detection of vision disorders or potential vision loss. For this reason, the [American Optometric Association](#) recommends a pediatric eye exam **at least once in children between the ages of 3 to 5 years.**

Often times, correctable vision problems in children are mistaken as a learning disability because of resulting difficulties finishing schoolwork in a timely fashion or an inability to pay attention. With the great increase of the prevalence of myopia worldwide, a failure to diagnose and treat children's vision problems early will put children at higher risks in the future. Requiring eye exams before entering schools serves as a baseline for children toward their full academic success in the classroom.

We again remain ready to support this effort and to ensure S1032 is signed into effect. Please note that we remain available to provide further information that you may need or to answer your questions or concerns.

Kristan Gross
Global Executive Director