Maryland PTA submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1242, Public School Students - Vision Services and the Vision for Maryland Program. This bill establishes a Vision for Maryland Program with which each county board of education will coordinate to ensure that certain students are able to receive an eye examination and if necessary, eyeglasses.

Maryland PTA wholeheartedly supports this bill because early diagnosis and treatment of children’s vision problems is a necessary component to school readiness and academic learning; and that vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Comprehensive eye and vision examinations by an optometrist or ophthalmologist are important for all children first entering school and regularly throughout their school-aged years to ensure healthy eyes and adequate vision skills essential for successful academic achievement. This bill also provides for a stronger comprehensive health program because it seeks to serve students who failed the vision screening program and coordinate with local county boards of education or county health departments to provide an eye examination for a public-school student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

Maryland PTA believes that HB 1242 seeks to remediate poor academic achievement by addressing potential vision concerns; especially since it favors providing eye exams to not only IEP students but those students who are:

1) Identified as having problem behavior and in need of a behavior intervention plan or
2) Not demonstrating grade-appropriate skills and content mastery and whose academic performance continues to decline despite intervention by the school.

Such corrective measures are in alignment with the Association’s belief that there should be shared responsibility for integrated school and community health promotion efforts.

It is for these reasons that Maryland PTA urges a favorable vote for House Bill 1242.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

Latisha Corey

Latisha Corey, President
Maryland Parent Teacher Association
president@mdpta.org