

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Third Regular Session



Senate
Office of the Secretary

15 SEP 10 P1:29

SENATE

S. No. 2948

RECEIVED BY: *[Signature]*

Introduced by SENATOR PIA S. CAYETANO

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM FOR
KINDERGARTEN PUPILS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Eye disorders or ailments are mostly corrected or addressed only in the adolescent or adult stage. But unknown to many, these problems can be detected and resolved at an early stage with the help of simple tests and non-surgical procedures.

According to the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI), which is under the National Institutes of Health of the University of the Philippines (UP), one (1) in twenty (20) pre-schoolers and one (1) in four (4) school-aged children has an eye problem. Furthermore, more than ten percent (10%) of young children have visual acuity problems, including errors of refraction (EOR) and amblyopia, even higher than the US' and Europe's five to ten percent (5-10%). Because children cannot, by themselves, identify that they have eye problems, studies recommend that vision screening should ideally be registered for children starting at age three (3).

The Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology likewise emphasizes the importance of normal eye alignment during infancy and childhood since poor vision at this stage affects the child's performance in school, or the way he or she interacts with the community. Leaving this disorder left untreated may lead to more serious eye problems and even, blindness.

Vision screening tests are simple methods used to identify children who have or are at risk in developing eye problems. It is deemed to be more efficient since it can identify numerous eye problems such as strabismus, cataract, glaucoma, amblyopia and other refractive errors. It is also cost-effective because instead of undergoing a comprehensive examination, the student is just required to look at a penlight or flashlight, or to read a chart specifically-made for vision screening.

Out of all our senses, the sense of sight is the most abused and neglected. Hence, it is important that vision screening tests be conducted at an early stage, precisely to prevent complications in the future. It is a call for the Department of Health, the Department of Education and all related institutions to collaborate and establish a centralized and organized program for vision screening tests.

For these reasons, approval of the Bill is urgently sought.

[Signature]
SENATOR PIA S. CAYETANO

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM FOR
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Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** – This Act shall be known as the “National Vision
2 Screening Act.”

3 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** – Pursuant to Article II, Section 15 of the 1987
4 Philippine Constitution, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and
5 promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them.
6 In line with this policy, the State shall endeavor to promote every Filipino’s full potential
7 through good vision by creating ways and means to address vision problems, including
8 blindness, among children.

9 Towards this end, the State shall institute a program that will help screen the
10 school children for visual problems.

11 **SEC. 3. Establishment of a National Vision Screening Program.** – A
12 National Vision Screening Program (NVSP) is hereby established under the
13 Department of Education (DepEd) which is primarily intended to screen the eye vision
14 of kindergarten pupils.

15 **SEC. 4. Program Objectives.** - The objectives of the NVSP are:

16 (a) To conduct a simple vision screening test on kindergarten pupils through
17 trained teachers and identify pupils with possible visual problems;

18 (b) To identify early childhood visual problems;

19 (c) To provide immediate attention to visually impaired kindergarten pupils and
20 create a referral system so that they may be checked and treated by eye
21 care practitioners;

22 (d) To develop a vision screening results database for all kindergarten pupils;
23 and

24 (e) To conduct continuing research on the state of visual impairment among
25 kindergarten pupils.

1 **SEC. 5. Program Implementation.** – The DepEd shall lead the implementation
2 of the NVSP, in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine
3 Eye Research Institute (PERI), which is under the National Institutes of Health of the
4 University of the Philippines (UP).

5 In the implementation of the NVSP, the DepEd shall:

6 (a) In coordination with the DOH and the PERI, administer the vision
7 screening program to all public kindergarten pupils using a Vision Screening Kit which
8 includes charts with symbols or numbers, occluders, and transparent response key:
9 *Provided*, That the DOH and PERI may recommend to adopt new modes or methods
10 of vision screening based on the latest trends and developments;

11 (b) In coordination with the DOH and PERI, shall train and certify teachers in
12 conducting the vision screening program;

13 (c) In consultation with the DOH and PERI, develop a system of referral and
14 corrective measures for kindergarten pupils who are suspected or diagnosed to have
15 possible eye ailments;

16 (d) Create a vision screening database containing the results of the screening
17 per child and visual conditions diagnosed by the eye care practitioners; and

18 (e) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NVSP.

19 **SEC. 6. PhilHealth's Benefit Package.** - The Philippine Health Insurance
20 Corporation (PhilHealth) shall develop a benefit package for the consultation and
21 treatment of eye diseases of children.

22 **SEC. 7. Vision Screening Training.** - The PERI shall be mainly responsible for
23 training of Vision Screening Trainers for purposes of quality assurance. It shall likewise
24 recommend the appropriate Vision Screening material to be used.

25 **SEC. 8. Research.** – The DOH and the PERI shall conduct research and
26 provide evidence-based recommendations to the DepEd on matters pertaining to the
27 NVSP. Furthermore, the PERI shall perform continuing research on childhood related
28 eye vision ailments.

29 **SEC. 9. The Vision Screening Continuing Research Fund.** – There is hereby
30 created a Vision Screening Continuing Research (VSCR) Fund to be sourced from any
31 donation or bequest made to the DepEd or DOH in favor of the NVSP. The VSCR
32 Fund shall be used to fund the PERI for its continuing research program in connection
33 with childhood related eye vision ailments.

34 **SEC. 10. Tax Exemption.** – Any donation or bequest made to the DepEd,
35 DOH, or PERI for the NVSP and for the VSCR Fund shall be exempt from donor's tax
36 and the same shall be considered allowable deduction from the gross income of the
37 donor, in accordance with the provisions of the National Internal Revenue Code of
38 1997, as amended: *Provided*, That the donation is duly approved by the DepEd, DOH,
39 or UP.

40 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** – The amount currently appropriated in the General
41 Appropriations Act for related activities under the DepEd and DOH shall be allocated
42 and utilized for the initial implementation of this Act. Thereafter, such amount as may
43 be necessary for the NVSP's implementation, including continuing research, shall be

1 included under the budget of the DepEd and DOH in the annual General
2 Appropriations Act.

3 **SEC. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within ninety (90) days
4 from the approval of this Act, the DepEd, in consultation with the DOH, PERI and other
5 participating government agencies, shall formulate the implementing rules and
6 regulations (IRR) of this Act.

7 **SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.*** – If any provision of this Act is held invalid or
8 unconstitutional, the other provisions not so declared shall remain in force and effect.

9 **SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, decrees, orders and rules and
10 regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
11 repealed or amended accordingly.

12 **SEC. 15. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
13 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,