

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2822**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**Introduced by Representative Estrellita B. Suansing**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Good vision is important to a child's physical development, contributing to his or her success and school and overall well-being. At ages 2-5, a child will be fine-tuning the visual abilities he has gained during infancy and developing new ones. Children use their vision to guide their learning experiences; according to educational experts, 80% of learning is visual. It is during this time that parents should be vigilant and be watchful on indications that may signal visual problems.

According to the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI), which is under the Institutes of Health of the University of the Philippines, one (1) in every twenty (20) pre-schoolers and one (1) in every 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. If left untreated, it may lead to more serious eye problems, including blindness.

Vision screening tests are simple methods used to identify children who have or 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 child 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 the vision screening tests be conducted at an early age, 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.

This bill has been filed during the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress but was not passed due to lack of material time. In view of the foregoing, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.

  
**ESTRELLITA B. SUANSING**

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**  
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House Bill No. **2822**

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

*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       SECTION 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 promote  
5 the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. In line with  
6 this policy, the State shall endeavor to promote every Filipino’s full potential through good  
7 vision by creating ways and means to address vision problems, including blindness, among  
8 children.

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

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

14       SECTION 4. *Program Objectives.* – The objectives of the NVSP are:

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

17       (b) To identify early childhood visual problems;

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

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

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

1       SECTION 5. *Program Implementation.* – The DepED shall lead the implementation  
2 of the NVSP, in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH and the Philippine Eye  
3 Research Institute (PERI), which is under the National Institutes of Health of the University  
4 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 screening  
7 program to all public kindergarten pupils using a Vision Screening Kit which includes charts  
8 with symbols or numbers, occluders, and transparent response key: *Provided*, That the  
9 DOH and PERI may recommend to adopt new modes or methods of vision screening based  
10 on the latest trends and development;

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

13       (c) In consultation with the DOH and the 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 per  
17 child and visual conditions diagnosed by the eye care practitioners; and

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

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

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

29       SECTION 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 Fund  
32 shall be used to fund the PERI for its continuing research program in connection with  
33 childhood-related eye vision ailments.

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

1       SECTION 11. *Appropriations.* – The amount currently appropriated in the General  
2       Appropriations Act for related activities under the DepED and DOH shall be allocated and  
3       utilized for the initial implementation of this Act. Thereafter, such amount as may be  
4       necessary for the NVSP's implementation, including continuing research, shall be included  
5       under the budget of the DepED and DOH in the annual General Appropriations Act.

6       SECTION 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from  
7       the approval of this Act, the DepED, in consultation with the DOH, the PERI, and other  
8       participating government agencies, shall formulate the implementing rules and regulations of  
9       this Act.

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

12       SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, decrees, instructions,  
13       issuances, rules and regulations contrary or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are  
14       hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

17       Approved,