



LFC Requester: Liu

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
BILL ANALYSIS  
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

**SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

Check all that apply:

Original  Amendment   
Correction  Substitute

Date Prepared: 02/12 /25

Bill No: SB344

**Agency Name and Code:** PED - 924

**Sponsor:** Soules

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**Short Title:** K-4 VISION AND HEARING SCREENING

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**SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT**

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

**APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
\$2,000.0	None	Nonrecurring	GF

**REVENUE (dollars in thousands)**

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

**ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)**

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>	None	None	None	None	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: [House Bill 141](#), the current version of the General Appropriation Act includes in the appropriation to the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired \$111.1 thousand for public service programs, including low-vision clinic programs.

## **SECTION III: NARRATIVE**

### **BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis: Senate Bill 344 (SB344) would appropriate \$2 million to the Public Education Department (PED) to provide vision and hearing screening for kindergarten through fourth grade students.

The bill does not provide an effective date. Laws go into effect 90 days after the adjournment of the legislature enacting them, unless a later date is specified. If enacted, this bill would become effective June 20, 2025.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

This bill would appropriate \$2 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY26 to provide vision and hearing screening for kindergarten through fourth grade students. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2026 shall revert to the general fund.

The legislature created the "[save our children's sight fund](#)" to develop and implement a vision screening program that makes vision screenings and follow-up comprehensive examinations available to New Mexico children regardless of family income. The Department of Health (DOH), which administers the fund, estimates the cost for vision and hearing screenings for 98,000 students in kindergarten through fourth grade as follows:

- Vision: \$10 - \$50 per student = \$980,000 to \$4.9 million
- Hearing: \$20 - \$75 per student = \$2 million to \$7.4 million

### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

**Vision screenings.** Statute ([Section 22-13-30 NMSA 1978](#)) requires a school nurse or the nurse's designee, a primary care health provider, or a lay eye screener to administer a vision screening test for students enrolled in the school in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first grade and third grade and for transfer and new students in those grades, unless a parent affirmatively prohibits the visual screening.

**Hearing screenings.** There are no mandatory hearing screening requirements. Hearing problems can develop after birth and these problems can have a negative impact on language and speech development, academic performance, and overall well-being. Although there is no federal mandate for hearing screenings, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) supports the goals of identifying children most likely to have a hearing loss that may interfere with communication and affect academic performance.

### **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

Early identification and detection of common childhood eye conditions promotes student health and learning. Visual disorders may result in students falling behind academically or increasing incidents of disruptive behaviors. One [study](#) from the *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science Journal* found that slight levels of hyperopia and astigmatism resulted in reduced reading speed, reading accuracy, comprehension, and visual processing.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

PED would need to administer the appropriation to provide vision and hearing screenings for students in kindergarten through fourth grade.

## **CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP**

Relates to House Bill 300 and Senate Bill 246, nearly identical bills that each propose the Seizure Safe Schools Act to provide for seizure management and care in the public schools.

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

None.

## **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

In 2007, the legislature created the "[save our children's sight fund](#)" in the state treasury. Money in the fund consists of appropriations, contributions, grants and statutory revenues directed to the fund. Money in the fund is appropriated to the Department of Health to administer the fund for the purpose of development and implementation of a vision screening program making vision screenings and follow-up comprehensive examinations available to New Mexico children regardless of family income. Money in the fund cannot revert at the end of a fiscal year.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

None.

## **WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

None.

## **AMENDMENTS**

None.