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October 16, 2001

Florida State Legislature

REF: Newborn Eye Screening Program Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you proposed new legislation to evaluate a Newborn Eye Screening Program for the State of Florida. I am currently the director of the Ocular Oncology Service at the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute / University of Miami-School of Medicine. This Ocular Oncology program is one of the largest existing in the United States and screens, treats and follows a large contingent of children with debilitating pediatric diseases, particularly pediatric oncology problems focusing on Retinoblastoma.

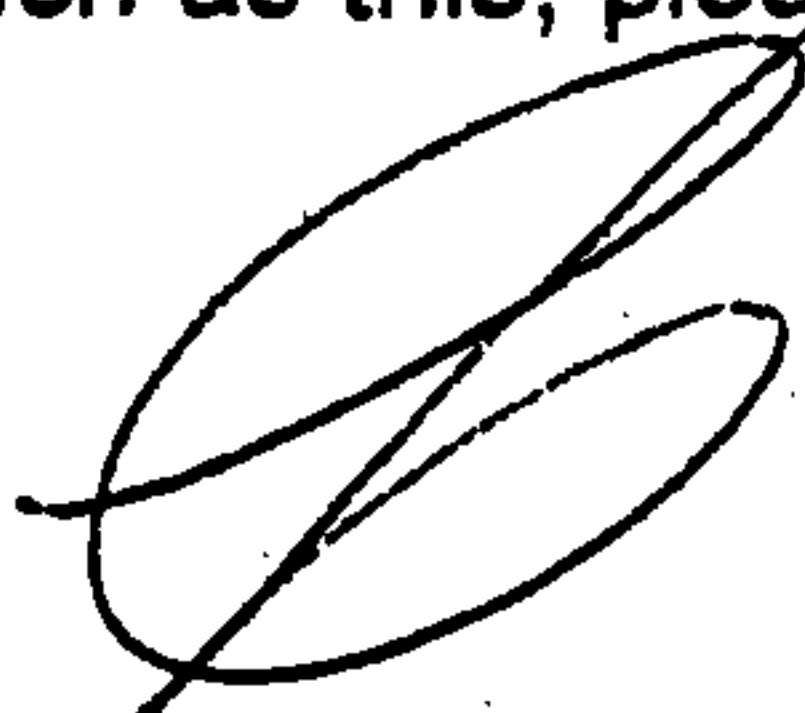
Retinoblastoma is the most common primary eye cancer in children and affects approximately one in twelve thousand children born within the United States. This devastating childhood cancer and many other pediatric eye diseases can be more effectively screened utilizing a Newborn Eye Screening Program as discussed in this proposal. The focus of this proposal is a mandatory pupillary dilation of all newborns and the establishment of an appropriate task force to advise the State Department of Health Services in the detection of pediatric congenital and ocular abnormalities, and pediatric developmental ocular abnormalities that may lead to blindness, vision impairment or premature death for children in the State of Florida.

Using Retinoblastoma as an example, this disease, with early diagnosis is imminently treatable in such a way as to both save life and, with early treatment intervention, save the affected eye with usable sight. We suggest that dilation of pupils at birth, the 6-8 week well-baby exam and future well baby exams would significantly decrease the delay in recognition of a variety of ocular disorders that are both sight and life threatening.

My colleagues and I feel that this legislation would be a first step towards enhancing the care of all children born in the State of Florida. We hope that this proposed legislation would be closely evaluated by you so that its benefit can be realized within a short future.

On behalf of myself, the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and all children who will benefit from legislation such as this, please accept our gratitude for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Timothy G. Murray, M.D., F.A.C.S.
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