



FIU

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Office of the Dean

November 5, 2001

Florida State Legislature

RE: Newborn Eye Screening Program Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

The proposed Newborn Eye Screening Program for the State of Florida addresses a serious health concern – preventing blindness in future generations of Floridians. As Dean of the College of Health and Urban Affairs at Florida International University I recommend the proposed legislation.

Implementation of this legislation will save the vision of hundreds of infants born in Florida every year. Moreover, it will do so in a cost-effective manner.

One child in every 677 live births is affected with a treatable eye disease or anomaly that will cause blindness unless detected early. The cost to the State in direct and indirect costs for a blind child over the course of a lifetime is approximately \$2 million. The cost of the proposed screening is that for two drops of dilating solution and 10 seconds of a nurse's time. Even when the costs for education and oversight are calculated, the economic benefits to the State are overwhelming. The benefits to children and their families is incalculable.

For these reasons I urge you to consider the proposed legislation for the benefit of all Floridians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald M. Berkman".

Ronald M. Berkman, Ph.D.
Dean

College of Health and Urban Affairs

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