



Parliament of Sint Maarten

Staten van Sint Maarten

To the Hon. Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
Drs. R.E. Samuel
Government Administration Building
Philipsburg

UV/061/2021-2022

Philipsburg, October 28, 2021

Re: Questions from MP S.L. Duncan regarding school eye health and screening

Hon. Minister Samuel,

Herewith I submit to you questions posed by Member of Parliament, Ms. S.L. Duncan (IS/161/2021-2022 dated October 21, 2021), according to article 62 of the Constitution and Article 69 of the Rules of Order of the Parliament of Sint Maarten.

Pursuant to article 69a of the Rules of Order, if you are unable to answer the questions within three weeks please notify my person stating the underlying reason. In doing so you can send the answers that you already have and answer the remaining questions in writing within (another period of) three weeks.

The letter is self-explanatory.

Yours truly,

R. Brison
President of Parliament



Solange Ludmila Duncan

Member of the Parliament of Sint Maarten

October 21, 2021

Rolando Brison
President of Parliament
Wilhelminastraat #1
Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

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RE: Questions to Minister of ECYS: School Eye Health

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Pursuant to article 69 of the Rules of Order of Parliament, I hereby request that you forward the attached questions regarding school eye health and screenings to the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Hon. Rodolphe Samuel.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Solange Ludmila Duncan
Member of Parliament



Solange Ludmila Duncan

Member of the Parliament of Sint Maarten

October 21, 2021

Hon. Rodolphe Samuel
Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport
Government of St. Maarten
Government Administration Building
Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

RE: Questions on School Eye Health

Dear Minister Samuel,

I believe that “if you struggle to see, you struggle to learn.” Although we may not have the data, I am aware of the fact that a number of our children struggle with vision impairment and conditions that cause eye damage and blindness like uncorrected refractive errors, trachoma, vitamin A deficiency disorders (VADD) and cataracts. Over the last few years I have bought glasses for children and young people who cannot afford them and there must be more.

In 2018, the Lion’s Club launched a project called the “Lion’s Eye Screening” which had a budget of almost USD\$24,000 raised through international fundraising and connected with nineteen (19) optometrists from the United States that visited St. Maarten to volunteer optometric services for all primary school students in groups 3 to 8. Those who needed glasses received a free pair through this project. I was a policy advisor at the Department of Education at the time. I do not believe there has been a similar project since.

Integrating eye health into our education systems will improve the quality of education for those students who are fighting vision impairment but whose families cannot afford prescriptive eye wear. Because glasses are so expensive, it is not only practical but efficient to create a sustainable private-public partnership with key partners on the island who may be willing to assist those most vulnerable students who desperately need the help. I would propose that the Ministry reach out to the Lion’s Club or the American University of the Caribbean to engage in such a partnership.

In regards to school eye health and the above-mentioned, I would like to inquire about the following;

1. When was the last time the Ministry was informed of any eye screening projects at the schools?
2. Is the Ministry collecting any school and student data on eye health in particular? If yes, can you please share this information? If no, is it something that can be done.
3. Is the Ministry aware of any school boards who implement eye health programs? If yes, can you please share which school boards and a short description of said program.
4. Do students at Prins Willem Alexander School (PWAS) receive regular eye exams?
5. Does (PWAS) school management pay particular attention to eye health and are there any concerns regarding eye health that have been registered with DPE?

6. Would it be possible for the Ministry to launch a private-public partnership with interested NGOs to not only assess current eye health in schools but also create a program where vulnerable students can receive free eye wear? If yes can the project also include the Ministry of VSA?
7. Do you believe that eye health should be integrated into the curriculums and general school health programs?

Thank you for your cooperation in advance and I look forward to your responses at your earliest convenience.

With kind regards,



Solange Ludmila Duncan
Member of Parliament