

# Protect your sight: What to know about ocular melanoma

**LEXINGTON** When you think of cancer, eye cancer may not be the first thing that comes to mind. However, ocular melanoma — a rare but serious disease — deserves attention. It is the most common primary eye cancer in adults, and early detection can significantly improve outcomes.

## What is ocular melanoma?

Ocular melanoma (also called uveal melanoma) develops from melanocytes, the cells that produce pigment in the eye. Although it accounts for only about 5% of all melanoma cases, it is the leading cancer that originates inside the eyeball in adults.

The uvea — the eye’s middle layer — includes the iris (the colored part), the ciliary body (involved in focusing), and the choroid (a layer rich in blood vessels). Most cases begin in the choroid.

## How common is it?

In the United States, ocular melanoma is diagnosed in about 5 out of every 1 million people annually, translating to roughly 2,000 new cases each year. Though rare, the disease requires vigilance because of its potential severity.

## Warning signs

Early-stage ocular melanoma often causes no symptoms and may only be detected during a routine eye exam. As the tumor grows, you might notice:

- Blurry vision or loss of side vision
  - Flashes of light
  - Floaters (spots drifting across vision)
  - A growing dark spot on the iris
  - A change in pupil shape
- These signs don’t always mean cancer, but any new visual change should be checked promptly.

## Risk factors

- Factors that may increase risk include:
- Age: More common after age 60
  - Light eye color: Blue, green, or gray eyes carry higher risk
  - Family history: Rarely, it can run in families

## Diagnosis, treatment, prognosis

If ocular melanoma is suspected, your doctor will refer you to an eye cancer specialist. Diagnostic tests typically include a detailed eye exam and imaging, such as ultrasound.

Treatment options vary by tumor size and spread, and may include:

- Radiation therapy
- Surgical removal
- Laser therapy
- Targeted or immunotherapy (if spread is detected)

The prognosis for small, localized tumors is generally good, with high rates of vision preservation and local tumor control. However, about 50% of patients with ocular melanoma may develop metastasis — most commonly to the liver — which can complicate outcomes. Close follow-up is essential.

## Why awareness matters

Though rare, ocular melanoma can be vision- and life-threatening. Regular eye exams, especially for people over 60 or those with light-colored eyes, are key to catching it early.

ADITYA BANSAL, M.D., is an ophthalmologist at the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center.

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# Kentucky may have to decide on federal education funding slack

BY MCKENNA HORSLEY  
KENTUCKY LANTERN

**FRANKFORT** A group of Kentucky lawmakers was briefed Tuesday on a slew of changes to federal education funding coming out of Washington.

During the first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education, Kentucky senators and representatives heard about proposals to cut the federal education budget and some pauses in funding under the Trump administration from Tara Thomas, government affairs manager for the AASA, The School Superintendents Association.

Tuesday marked the start of interim committee meetings for state lawmakers this year. In the months ahead, committees of senators and representatives will hear presentations to gather information to use in the 2026 legislative session. That’s when legislators will debate and finalize the next two-year state budget.

In recent months, the Kentucky Department of Education and Robbie Fletcher, the state’s education commissioner, have sent public warnings about how losing funding, particularly dollars previously prom-



LRC PHOTO  
**Rep. Tina Bojanowski, D-Louisville, left, speaks during the Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting.**

ised as COVID relief, will jeopardize projects in Kentucky schools. About two weeks ago, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) denied a \$10.6 million request to extend COVID relief funding submitted by KDE on behalf of school districts.

Thomas told lawmakers that the federal Education Department has denied some extensions for projects that were not related to services “directly provided to students.” Some examples include projects for improving building ventilation or the environment of the schools or supporting professional development programs.

Thomas said Kentucky may have to consider if it wants to fund some of these denied requests for education programs and resources itself. Ele-

mentary and secondary education receives the biggest chunk of Kentucky’s General Fund budget and is one of the most polarizing issues.

“If Kentucky has some of those programs ... you had extensions for and no longer have it, I think the state’s going to have to determine if they want to continue those programs or not,” Thomas said.

Other topics during the presentation included a review of the Republicans’ “big, beautiful bill” moving through Congress and the Trump administration’s recently released budget request for the next fiscal year. The budget bill includes a tax credit scholarship for a nationwide “school choice” program. Kentucky voters rejected a constitutional amendment

last November to allow the General Assembly to fund nonpublic schools with public money.

As the committee was pressed for time with other presentations during the meeting, Rep. Adrielle Camuel, D-Lexington, was the only lawmaker to ask a question of Thomas. Camuel asked for clarification about if the tax credit allowed for states to create reporting requirements to show how “funds are being spent, how they’re using the federal tax credits.”

Thomas said that as of right now, the proposal has been a straightforward tax credit, but “going to the administration’s deferral to states, I would imagine that they might allow for implementing additional accountability standards if that’s what the state wants to do.” President Donald Trump previously signed an executive order to move the U.S. Education Department’s main functions to the states.

Committee co-chairman Sen. Steve West, R-Paris, said the briefing was intended to be a snapshot of the changes in federal policies and how they will affect Kentucky.

“I’m sure things will change tomorrow,” West said.

# Beshear steps up campaign to ensure preschool for every Kentucky 4-year-old

BY BRUCE SCHREINER  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LOUISVILLE** Democratic Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear stepped up his efforts Wednesday to guarantee preschool access for every 4-year-old in the state, offering assurances his plan would reap widespread benefits — improving student performance while bolstering employment and family incomes.

Having been stymied by the state’s GOP-supermajority legislature in recent years when he pitched his universal pre-K plan, Beshear kicked off a campaign in hopes of building grassroots support. It comes about seven months before lawmakers convene in January for their 2026 session, which could be the term-limited governor’s last realistic chance to turn his ambitious preschool plan into law. The 2026 session will be highlighted by work to pass the state’s next two-year budget.

Beshear, a two-term governor seen as a potential presidential candidate in 2028, said every child “deserves a good start” by ensuring they are prepared for kindergarten. The Bluegrass State

is falling short of that goal, he said, pointing to statistics showing more than half of Kentucky children are unprepared for their first day of kindergarten, creating an achievement gap that’s difficult to overcome.

“Scripture tells us that children are a gift from God,” Beshear said during his campaign-style stop in Louisville. “And I believe that we have a responsibility as adults to build a better state for every single one of them. We all know that we can do this with pre-K for all. Let’s finally get this done.”

Nearly two-thirds of Kentucky’s 120 counties lack sufficient child care to serve every family that needs it, the governor said. Workforce participation rates tend to be lower in counties with fewer childcare options, Beshear’s administration said.

“Kentucky will never reach its potential if our children’s zip code determines their place in the world by the first day of kindergarten,” said Democratic Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, a former public school teacher and administrator. “The time for pre-K is now.”

The benefits of his pre-K pro-

posal would be much broader and would include increasing the state’s workforce by enabling more parents to go back to work, Beshear said. and it would help ease the financial burden on parents with young children, he said.

“American families right now are struggling, struggling to pay the bills, and child care is a big part of that,” Beshear said. “Pre-K for all could ease the financial burden facing our hardworking families and make paying those bills not just a little but a lot easier.”

Beshear on Wednesday did not delve into how much state-funded preschool would cost, but he pointed to a study indicating every \$1 invested in pre-K generates \$10 cycling through the state economy.

Leading up to the 2024 legislative session, Beshear’s budget plan included \$172 million each year of the following two-year budget cycle to provide preschool for 4-year olds. Beshear has said the expense is “more than affordable,” amounting to a fraction of the massive surplus in the state’s budget

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# Local surgeon to relocate practice

STAFF REPORT

**PORTSMOUTH** Long-time Ashland general surgeon Roderick Tompkins, M.D., is

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moving his practice to King’s Daughters Ohio hospital, according to a news release. Tompkins has practiced at UK King’s Daughters in Ashland since 1997. He will begin seeing patients in Portsmouth in July.

“Over the last 28 years, I’ve taken out more than 6,000 gallbladders in the area,” Tompkins said. “I’m looking forward to

serving the Portsmouth and southern Ohio community as I’ve done in Ashland. King’s Daughters Ohio is a wonderful facility. The staff is excellent.”

Dr. Tompkins will be focused on abdominal surgery, including gallbladder removal and hernia repair. He will also perform skin cancer removals and endoscopies. No physician refer-

ral is needed.

A Kentucky native, Dr. Tompkins earned his medical degree from the University of Louisville School of Medicine in 1992. He completed his residency in general surgery at the University of South Florida in Tampa in 1997. He is board certified by the American College of Surgeons for General Surgery.

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