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January 15, 2009

The Honorable Christopher "Kit" Bond
United States Senate
274 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bond:

On behalf of Prevent Blindness America and our advocates, I want to thank you for your leadership on children's vision health in the United States Senate and voice our support for your legislation, the "Vision Care for Kids Act of 2009."

Since its founding in 1908, Prevent Blindness America has led the nation in preventing children's vision loss. Last year, we screened more than two million children around the country and helped families, who might not otherwise have known there was a problem, by referring thousands of children to eye doctors for professional care. Prevent Blindness America's efforts toward ensuring a lifetime of vision and good eye health for our nation's children continues even after a vision screening. Follow-up support to help children get the professional eye care they need is an essential part of our advocacy for – and efforts to ensure access to – a continuum of vision care.

We know that studies from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that there is a significant gap in the nation's vision care system, as evidenced by the finding that the majority of children are not receiving the vision care they need. The "Vision Care for Kids Act" will help ensure much-needed access to vision care for our nation's children. Moreover, your approach, importantly, gives states the regulatory flexibility to promote and deliver children's vision care in a fashion that is most appropriate for their own populations. We thank you for crafting a proposal that gives parity to all states, while also encouraging and rewarding them to follow through from vision problem identification to vision treatment.

We know the hard work put into this legislation will provide the fertile ground necessary to help us move toward enactment in the 111th Congress. Please know that Prevent Blindness America stands ready to work with you and your staff on this important effort. We are committed to engaging in advocacy activities to garner broad support for the "Vision Care for Kids Act" and help secure its advancement through the legislative process.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Andrea Densham, Prevent Blindness America's Vice President of Public Health and Government Affairs at (312) 363-6032 or at adensham@preventblindnessamerica.org. Thank you again for your leadership and commitment to improving children's vision health.

Thank you,

Hugh R. Parry
President and CEO, Prevent Blindness America

cc: Julie Jolly, Health Legislative Assistant