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SENATE INTRODUCES BILL TO HELP SAVE SIGHT IN AMERICA'S CHILDREN

Prevent Blindness America Supports the "Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007" Protecting Children's Vision

CHICAGO (April 20, 2007) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest non-profit eye health and safety organization, announced its strong support for Senate bill S.1117, also known as the "Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007." This groundbreaking legislation would provide eye exams and follow up care for children who have been identified as needing vision care services. The bi-partisan bill was sponsored by Sens. Christopher Bond (R-MO) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT). The companion bill, H.R. 507, was introduced in January in the House of Representatives.

"Research shows that more than 12 million school-age children, or one in four, have some form of a vision problem," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. "Through proper vision screenings and follow-up care, we can potentially save their sight and make a difference in the lives of our most precious resource, our children."

With early diagnosis and treatment, many vision problems such as amblyopia, also known as "lazy eye," and strabismus, known as "crossed eyes," can be corrected. Unfortunately, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that only a third of America's children receive any eye care service before their sixth birthday. With many families struggling to find affordable healthcare insurance, vision exams sometimes become out of reach.

The Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007 was developed by leading vision care organizations, including Prevent Blindness America, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association and the Vision Council of America to address these challenges.

"With such strong support from the vision community, the Vision Care for Kids Act will stimulate our ongoing dialogue with Congress about the importance and need for more federal funding and additional policies regarding research, prevention and access to care and treatment of vision problems," added Garrett.

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Prevent Blindness America is asking the public for their help in passing this important legislation by contacting their government leaders and urging them to support policies that save children's vision. Concerned citizens can go to the Prevent Blindness America's Web site at www.preventblindness.org and type in their ZIP code in the "Contact Congress" box, which will then provide users with the contact information of their federal, state and local representatives.

For more information on children's eye health, please call 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the Web at www.preventblindness.org.

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