

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GROUNDBREAKING LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO HELP SAVE CHILDREN'S VISION

Prevent Blindness America Supports the "Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007" Ensuring Access to Better Eye Health

CHICAGO (Jan. 17, 2007) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization, announced its strong support for the "Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007." This legislation, introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, would provide eye exams and follow up care for children who have been identified as needing vision care services.

The legislation was developed by Prevent Blindness America and other leading vision care organizations, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association and the Vision Council of America as well as leaders in the Congressional Vision Caucus, in response to the growing need for vision services for children.

Only one in three children in America receive eye care services before their sixth birthday, according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), despite the fact that one in four preschoolers has a vision problem. Children who have undiagnosed vision disorders can become frustrated in school and labeled with learning disorders or behavioral problems. With healthcare dollars already being stretched to the limit, providing follow-up care to children who have failed a vision screening has been a nationwide challenge.

"Last year, Prevent Blindness America provided more than 2 million vision screenings to children. Unfortunately, close to 10 percent of those kids failed their screenings," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. "We are thrilled that the 'Vision Care for Kids Act of 2007' will close that gap for children who desperately need appropriate follow-up care to save their sight."

If left untreated, vision disorders such as amblyopia ("lazy eye") and strabismus ("crossed eyes") severely impair children's vision as they grow older. Through early detection and treatment by a licensed eye care professional, however, the effects of these conditions can be minimal and in some cases, completely corrected.

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Prevent Blindness America is asking the public for their help in passing this important legislation by contacting their Members of Congress 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 visit 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, 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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