

June 5, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As the United States Senate begins the process of drafting legislation to accompany H.R. 1628, the American Healthcare Act (AHCA), the organizations signed below are asking for your support in preserving coverage for a comprehensive eye examination for children as well as preventive health services, including vision screenings, as defined under the Affordable Care Act (ACA)'s essential health benefits (EHB). Vision impairments and eye disorders are the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading chronic condition among children with costs for direct medical care, vision aids and devices, and caregivers amounting to \$10 billion per year. Our nation's families are shouldering 45% of these costs. Common childhood eye disorders and vision impairments are easily treatable if caught early; however, as written, the AHCA jeopardizes early detection and cost-effective treatments that could prevent lifelong vision impairment and result in permanent loss of vision.

Eyesight and vision are intrinsically linked to early childhood development processes, including cognitive and motor function, socialization, and psychological development. In addition, optical correction of significant refractive error can result in improved school readiness and avoid deficits in literacy for pre-school aged children as they enter grade school. Because young children and their parents may not be aware of reduced visual function, vision screenings and eye examinations as provided under current EHB requirements are vital for detecting problems before development and learning ability are compromised.

We are furthermore concerned that an insurmountable burden would be placed on state public health infrastructure in the absence of national policies that support and prioritize preventive measures. In September 2016, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) released a report ("Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow") that recognizes that for too long vision and eye health have not received the attention and investment they warrant, given their importance to public health. Without the existing mechanisms in the EHBs in place to ensure that children can receive critical vision screenings and access eye examinations regardless of social or economic status, this significant public health oversight will continue to impact our nation's children.

We urge the Senate to preserve the children's vision coverage as currently defined under the ACA's EHB. Prevention is a critical element in a strong public health infrastructure, and we ask that the Senate work to preserve the ability for children to receive eye and vision health services that establish a foundation for healthy development, school readiness, and lifelong vision health.

Sincerely,

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus  
Alabama Lions Sight Conservation Association  
Alabama Vision Coalition

Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center  
American Academy of Optometry  
American Council of the Blind  
American Council of the Blind of Nebraska  
American Council of the Blind of New York  
American Foundation for the Blind  
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology  
Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Blair/Clearfield Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services  
Bright Focus Foundation  
Bucks County Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Byers Eye Institute at Stanford University  
Cahaba Valley Health Care  
Capital Area Guide Dog Users Inc  
Center for the Visually Impaired  
Center for Vision Loss  
Central Ohio Lions Eye Bank  
Central Susquehanna Sight Services, Inc.  
Combat Blindness International  
Community Services for Sight  
Council of Citizens with Low Vision International  
DeLand Lions Club  
Department of Ophthalmology, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University  
Department of Pediatrics, Children's Hospital at Montefiore  
Eye Bank Association of America  
EyeSight Foundation of Alabama  
Fayette County Association for the Blind  
Florida Lions Conklin Centers for the Blind  
George Washington Department of Ophthalmology  
Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation Inc.  
Guide Dog Users of New York, Inc.  
Guide Dog Users of Washington State  
Guide Dog Users, Inc.  
Guide Dogs of Hawaii  
Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Healthy Eyes Alliance  
Helen Keller International  
Houston Health Department  
Howard University Department of Ophthalmology  
International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness  
Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness  
International Eye Foundation  
International Retinal Research Foundation  
Lackawanna Blind Association  
Lavelle Fund for the Blind  
Lighthouse Guild  
Lions Clubs International  
Macular Degeneration Partnership  
Medical Outreach Ministries

Missouri Council of the Blind  
National Keratoconus Foundation  
New England College of Optometry  
NYU Langone Eye Center, NYU School of Medicine  
Ohio Public Health Association  
Optometry Giving Sight  
Ormond by the Sea Lions Club  
PASS Coalition (Pedestrians for Accessible and Safe Streets)  
Pediatric Ophthalmology of Montefiore Hospital Medical Center  
Pennsylvania Association for the Blind  
Pennsylvania Council of the Blind  
Perkins School for the Blind  
Pine tree GUIDED dog users  
Port Orange Lions Club  
Prevent Blindness  
Prevent Blindness Georgia  
Prevent Blindness Iowa  
Prevent Blindness North Carolina  
Prevent Blindness Northeast Region  
Prevent Blindness Northern California  
Prevent Blindness Wisconsin  
Prevent Blindness, Ohio Affiliate  
Prevent Blindness Texas  
Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation  
SEE International  
Seva Foundation  
Slatington Elementary School  
State University of New York College of Optometry  
Steepness Eye Research Institute/Massachusetts Eye & Ear  
That Man May See  
The Children's Center, Volunteers of America  
The Gibney Family Foundation  
The Sight Center of Northwest Pennsylvania  
United Way of Erie County  
University Hospitals  
University of Pikeville, Kentucky College of Optometry  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
UPMC Eye Center - Department of Ophthalmology  
Venango County Association for the Blind  
VIPS (Visually Impaired Persons Support)  
Vision Forward Association  
Vision Impact Institute  
Vision Resources of Central Pennsylvania  
VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
VisionServe Alliance  
Wyoming Council Of The Blind

Cc: Members, United States Senate