

June 16, 2017

George Sigounas, MS, PhD
Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration,
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Dr. Sigounas,

On behalf of Prevent Blindness and its National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health, we would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Administrator for the Health Resources and Services Administration and take this opportunity to introduce our organizations as a resource to you in your work.

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading not-for-profit, voluntary eye health and safety organization. We touch the lives of millions of people each year through our mission of preventing blindness and preserving sight. Prevent Blindness is first and foremost a public health agency committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. As such, we focus on improving the nation's vision and eye health by enhancing state and community capacities through our core competencies of early detection, patient support, care coordination, public policy, research, public awareness, and health education. Half of all blindness can be prevented, yet this can only occur through these essential interventions.

Prevent Blindness has maintained healthy vision for America's children as one of our core missions since our very founding. In 1926, we developed the first volunteer-run preschool vision screening program- and to this day, we remain involved in the direct provision of care through the training for, and delivery of, vision screening and eye care referral services to millions of children in communities across the country. Realizing that all stakeholders across the spectrum must be engaged in this challenge, Prevent Blindness established our National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health (the "NCCVEH"), with support from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, to strengthen the nation's public health approach for children's vision, as well as our own capacity to better serve the needs of state requested technical assistance.

We believe that all young children deserve improved care coordination to ensure that vision problems are identified early and treated in a timely manner, standards for screening and care are uniform across the country, and that appropriate surveillance and preventive interventions are in place. Our NCCVEH is reshaping children's vision and eye health at the national and state levels to ensure no child is unsuccessful in school or life as a result of an undiagnosed vision problem. The NCCVEH is committed to conducting this work through strong partnerships, sound science, and targeted programmatic initiatives.



Vision impairments caused by refractive error, amblyopia, strabismus, and/or astigmatism are common conditions among young children, affecting 5 to 10 percent of all preschoolers and nearly 1 in 4 school-aged children. If not detected and treated early, vision impairment could affect all aspects of life, negatively impacting a child's ability to learn, athletic performance, and self-esteem. There is no question that the first years of a child's life are the most critical in his or her development into a healthy, strong, contributing member of our society. We further know that vision plays a critical role in this evolution; vision problems, alternatively, bring with them a tremendous long-term cost to our economy. Annually, the economic burden of eye conditions among the U.S. population younger than age 18 is \$6.1 billion, and untreated amblyopia alone costs the U.S. nearly \$7.4 billion in earning power. The impact that vision problems have on our country's overall health is clear; it will take strong state-level initiatives with a coordinated national approach to turn the tide for children's vision and eye health.

Prevent Blindness, through its work with the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health, is reshaping our national approach for children's vision and eye health to ensure no child is unsuccessful in life as a result of undetected vision problems. We look forward to a continued strong partnership with HRSA in our efforts to improve the continuum of children's vision care in the U.S. We would welcome an opportunity to introduce ourselves and the work of the NCCVEH to you in the near future. Should you have any questions, or if we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kira Baldonado, Director of the Center at (312) 363-6038 or kbaldonado@preventblindness.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff R. Pung", is written over a white rectangular background.

President and CEO