

June 2, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

As the United States Senate considers health reform legislation, our organizations write to urge support for policies that ensure that children have access to appropriate vision services. The early detection of treatable eye diseases in infancy and childhood can have far reaching implications for vision, quality of life, and in some cases, general health. These issues have been well highlighted by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine in their report entitled “Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow” that was released in September 2016.

Because early detection and treatment of eye and vision problems is critical to a child’s healthy development, our organizations support pediatric vision benefits that are evidence-based and include both preventive care and access to high quality screening, vision, medical, and surgical eye care. As such, we urge the Senate to protect Essential Health Benefits, which include coverage of “pediatric services, including oral and vision care.”

We believe that vision screenings for the detection of eye disease and refractive disorders should be offered as recommended in *Bright Futures*, a national health promotion and prevention initiative led by the American Academy of Pediatrics that provides theory-based and evidence-driven guidance for all preventive care screenings and well-child visits. We also strongly support the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) standard in Medicaid which ensures that child beneficiaries of the program receive necessary services such as vision screening. Cuts to Medicaid threaten the viability of EPSDT and therefore we urge the Senate to keep Medicaid strong for the 37 million children that rely on Medicaid. In addition, our organizations believe that states should choose models of pediatric vision services that are consistent with *Bright Futures*, EPSDT, and the services provided through the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

We hope to be a resource to you and to states promoting high-quality, cost-effective approaches to providing America’s children with the eye care they need. Preserving children’s coverage in any health reform legislation will help ensure the healthy development of children.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Ophthalmology

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus

American Association of University Professors of Ophthalmology

Eye Bank Association of America

Prevent Blindness

Research to Prevent Blindness