



211 West Wacker Drive
Suite 1700
Chicago, Illinois 60606

toll free 800.331.2020
local 312.363.6001
fax 312.363.6052

PreventBlindness.org

October 27, 2017

The Honorable Eric D. Hargan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Humphrey Building, Suite 701H
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Hargan:

On behalf of Prevent Blindness and its affiliates around the country, we would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment to be the Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). [Prevent Blindness](#) is the nation's leading not-for-profit, voluntary eye health and safety organization. We touch the lives of millions of people across the age continuum each year through our mission of preventing blindness and preserving sight. Prevent Blindness is first and foremost a public health organization. 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, advocacy, research, public awareness, and health education.

As your agency continues its work developing its budget justification and strategic plan for Fiscal Year 2019, we would like to draw your attention to Title II of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee Report to the Bill making appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies; specifically, the Office of the Secretary, General Departmental Management, and appropriations to support activities associated with the Secretary's role as policy officer and general manager of the Department.

For FY 2019, the Members of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee have made the following request of the Office of the Secretary, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and the Office of the Surgeon General with respect to eye health:

"The Committee commends the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) for the September 2016 release of its report '[Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow](#)' which includes recommendations regarding continued leadership by HHS to reduce the burden of vision impairment. The Committee requests an update from the Secretary regarding HHS' progress in implementing these recommendations in the Fiscal Year 2019 Congressional Justification."

Throughout the NASEM report, there are a number of recommendations that made a direct call for the federal government to motivate nationwide action toward achieving a reduction in the burden of vision impairment across the lifespan of people in the United States. In addition to acknowledging the important – yet underfunded – roles of the Vision Health Initiative at the CDC and the National Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health, the report committee acknowledged the quality improvement work, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau, being led by the [National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health](#) at Prevent Blindness as a leading example of the importance of continuous quality improvement in advancing population health.

A coordinated approach to interventions that support key stakeholders and state-based public health systems is needed to expand early detection, prevention, patient support, and research to lessen the burden of vision



disorders on working adults and our nation's public health infrastructure. We believe that these strategies are critical in stemming the burgeoning tide of preventable vision loss and ensuring that Americans, through optimal vision, continue to engage with the world around them, see to work and learn, and maintain our independence as we age.

Please know that Prevent Blindness stands ready to assist you in developing these recommendations and report to the U.S. Senate in your agency's FY 2019 Congressional Justification. We look forward to a strong partnership with you in our efforts to improve vision care in the United States, and we would welcome an opportunity to introduce ourselves in person and further discuss the work of Prevent Blindness to you in the near future. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Sara D. Brown, Director of Government Affairs, at (312) 363-6031 or sbrown@preventblindness.org.

Sincerely,

Hugh. R. Parry
President and Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Don Wright, M.D., MPH,
Acting Assistant Secretary for Health

The Honorable Jerome M. Adams, M.D., MPH
United States Surgeon General

The Honorable John R. Graham
Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

The Honorable Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

The Honorable Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Institutes of Health

The Honorable Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Eye Institute
National Institutes of Health

The Honorable George Sigounas, MS, Ph.D.
Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration