

June 5, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading nonprofit, voluntary organization committed to preventing blindness and preserving sight. On behalf of millions of people of all ages across the country who live with vision impairment, low vision, and vision-related eye diseases, we write to voice our opposition to the Administration's proposals to reduce the federal deficit by rescinding \$7 billion in budget authority from the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Vision impairments and eye disorders are the 3rd 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 already shouldering 45% of these costs. For many families with children, CHIP is the only avenue for access to sight-saving vision screenings and eye examinations.

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 CHIP, are vital for detecting problems before development and learning ability are compromised. These early investments in preventive health pay dividends as the child ages.

Earlier this year, Congress passed a law authorizing CHIP for an additional 10 years; a law that was signed by the President to protect coverage for children, give families peace of mind, and enables states to make investments that strengthen and improve their CHIP programs. Currently, Congress is considering proposals that would rescind \$2 billion from the Child Enrollment Contingency Fund and \$5 billion in budget authority designed to respond to unforeseen changes to states' annual CHIP spending. **Rescinding this funding would eliminate the certainty that states will be able to cover children and respond to their healthcare needs and undermines the program that Congress agreed to strengthen.**

As Congress works toward finding solutions to reduce our national debt, we urge you to protect children and families and reject policies that eliminate previously agreed-upon, bipartisan spending policies like CHIP.

Sincerely,



Jeff Todd
President and Chief Executive Officer
Prevent Blindness