

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Prevent Blindness to Hold Thirteenth Annual
“Eyes on Capitol Hill” Advocacy Event**

***-Non-profit Organization Brings Delegates From Across the Country
to Educate Government Representatives on the Importance of
Healthy Sight and Vision Program Support-***

CHICAGO (July 2, 2018) – [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s oldest non-profit eye health and safety organization, will be holding its thirteenth annual [“Eyes on Capitol Hill”](#) advocacy day on Tuesday, July 17, 2018, in Washington, D.C. Prevent Blindness and its affiliates, dedicated to giving a voice to vision issues, will bring together citizens from across the country to meet with Congress and their staff to speak on vision issues and to request support for public health programs.

Prevent Blindness, founded in New York 110 years ago, began as a public health group dedicated to preventing a blinding eye condition in newborns, then known as “Babies’ Sore Eyes.” Since then, the group has grown nationally and expanded its scope to address vision issues across the age spectrum.

This year’s Eyes on Capitol Hill meetings have been scheduled to continue to educate Members of Congress about the enormity of the impact vision problems are having on our country. Absent significant investment and intervention, the annual cost of vision problems in the U.S. is anticipated to increase from \$145 billion currently to \$717 billion by 2050. Specifically, advocates will ask elected officials to:

- Provide at least \$3.3 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 to maintain vision and eye health efforts at the Vision Health Initiative (VHI) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Provide \$3.5 million to the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at the Health Resources and Services Administration (MCHB-HRSA).
- Provide at least \$4 million for the Glaucoma Project at CDC.

- Provide \$800 million to the National Eye Institute (NEI) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for FY 2019.
- Protect the CDC's public health response capabilities from a drastic loss of funding in the absence of the Prevention and Public Health Fund by providing a corresponding budget increase in FY 2019.

“Funding programs that help to protect vision and provide access to quality healthcare is an investment that not only saves money in the future, but improved vision makes an immediate impact for an individual- both socially and in productivity levels,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Through our Eyes on Capitol Hill event, as well as our ongoing advocacy efforts throughout the year, we are working on behalf of all Americans to educate our nation’s leaders on the positive impact they have by providing these much-needed dollars.”

In addition to meeting with Members of Congress, Prevent Blindness leadership will also be meeting with the office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II to discuss opportunities for improving eye health across the country.

On July 18, all Eyes on Capitol Hill delegates will attend the seventh annual [Focus on Eye Health National Summit](#) at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

At the Summit, Prevent Blindness will be presenting an official award to Congressional Vision Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Gene Green (TX) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL), in recognition of their years of dedicated service to improve vision health and protect sight.

For more information on Eyes on Capitol Hill or Prevent Blindness and its advocacy initiatives, please call (800) 331-2020 or visit <https://www.preventblindness.org/eyes-capitol-hill-2018>.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1 (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org.

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