

Analysis of Vision and Eye Health Policies in President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request to Congress

Last week, the Biden Administration released its first full budget request to Congress, titled “[Budget of the U.S. Government FY2022](#).” President Biden’s FY 2022 budget proposal includes several components of the Administration’s \$2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan and \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan, in addition to proposals for \$1.5 trillion in annual appropriations across both federal defense and non-defense programs. Ultimately, decisions around federal spending and appropriations are deliberated and determined by Congress; however, the President’s budget is a key indicator of the Administration’s overall policy agenda and goals. Below are key aspects of the President’s budget respective to vision and eye health policies that improve access to eye care, address disparities and inequities across diverse populations, and foster a system of care.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Overall, the President’s budget includes a request to increase the HHS funding level by 23% for a **total agency funding level of \$134 billion**. The Administration’s main funding priorities are directed toward strengthening public health emergency preparedness and response, rebuilding public health infrastructure (including public health workforce and modernized data analytics and technology), and addressing health inequities across the health care system. President Biden also included aspects of his health care agenda with respect to Medicare, Medicaid, and Affordable Care Act coverage in his Administration’s budget request, and called on Congress to improve access to vision coverage in the Medicare program. For detailed information: [HHS FY2022 Budget in Brief](#).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The President’s budget request includes an increase to the CDC’s funding level to **\$9.5 billion** – which is \$1.7 billion over FY2021 funding levels. This represents the biggest increase in the past two decades to the CDC and ends a legacy of chronic underfunding of our national public health system, which has decimated the CDC’s capacity to respond to ongoing and emerging health threats like chronic disease and outbreaks like the COVID-19 pandemic. The CDC’s budget request includes significant investments to improve public health infrastructure, data modernization efforts, and improve our national public health workforce. Prevent Blindness has [endorsed](#), through the CDC Coalition, a funding level of \$10 billion in FY2022. For detailed information: [CDC FY2022 Congressional Justification](#).

Of this funding request, programs under the CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (which houses the Vision Health Initiative) would be funded at \$1.45 billion and receive a **total increase of \$176 million over FY2021 funding levels**; the bulk of which (\$150 million) would be directed toward addressing social determinants of health in all states and territories. Prevent Blindness [signed a letter](#) with numerous organizations to request **\$3.75 billion** toward chronic disease prevention and health promotion efforts at the CDC.

Below are additional details:

- ***Vision and Eye Health*** – Budgeted at \$1 million.
 - Prevent Blindness recommends a minimum funding level of ***\$5 million*** to the Vision and Eye Health program (Vision Health Initiative) to conduct essential surveillance of vision loss and eye disease for use in developing state and community-based interventions.
 - The CDC acknowledges that vision disability ranks in the top 10 disabling conditions for Americans over age 18, and commits in FY2022 to developing state capacity to integrate vision and eye health into current public health infrastructure. The CDC will continue its work across seven states to develop state plans that improve vision and eye health.

- ***Glaucoma*** – Budgeted at \$4 million.
 - Prevent Blindness recommends ***\$4 million*** for glaucoma prevention efforts that connect communities at high risk of glaucoma to early detection and treatment.

- The CDC commits to continuing its five-year, community-based approach to reach populations at high risk of glaucoma through service delivery models that improve glaucoma detection and management.

Prevent Blindness [supports](#) the Administration’s funding level for social determinants of health (which can be a driver of poor vision health outcomes and disparate access to eye care across various populations). However, the proposed flat funding for programs that address basic health and wellness and help prevent chronic disease and promote healthy lifestyles—including in areas where vision loss and eye disease as a consequence or comorbidity of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke, and tobacco addiction exist—is disheartening; particularly as observations from the COVID-19 pandemic indicate that poor health status and underlying chronic diseases often resulted in the most serious complications of the novel coronavirus. Earlier this year, Prevent Blindness led a coalition of 117 organizations to urge [House](#) and [Senate](#) appropriators to fund the CDC’s Vision and Eye Health and glaucoma programs at \$5 million and \$4 million, respectively, in FY2022.

Another program where Prevent Blindness is increasing our engagement for its focus on developmental disabilities and early intervention is the National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD), which would receive **a total program increase of \$5 million in FY2022**. This increase would be directed specifically toward surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies—a program that was born out of the Zika virus outbreak and endorsed by Prevent Blindness for its importance in tracking visual defects in newborns exposed to the Zika virus and at potential risk for its lifelong consequences. Efforts to address neonatal abstinence syndrome, which may also affect visual development in babies, would remain at the current funding level of \$2.25 million.

Prevent Blindness has also [engaged in efforts](#) across the aging health community to fund elderly falls prevention at the CDC at \$4 million in FY2022. This program line at the CDC’s Injury Prevention and Control Center would stay flat at just over \$2 million the President’s FY2022 budget.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

The President’s budget request includes a 4.1% increase to HRSA’s funding level for a total of \$12.6 billion in FY2022. However, with some mandatory sequestration policies still in place across various HRSA programs, the final budget authority requested for HRSA would be **\$7.83 billion, or an 8% increase over FY2021 levels**. Funding increases are specifically directed toward the Administration’s priorities in maternal health, combatting the HIV epidemic, and enhancing community health capacity through workforce and community health centers.

This funding request includes an increase of nearly \$125 million for a total funding level of **\$1.5 billion to the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)**. Notably, the **Maternal and Child Health Block Grant program would be funded at \$822.7 million**. This increase also includes **\$81 million over FY2021 levels to grants supporting children’s development and health**—including children’s vision and eye health. Prevent Blindness [joined](#) other groups in support of a funding line to Title V programs of \$750 million in FY2022, and will support efforts to urge Congress to meet if not exceed the Administration’s funding level in spending legislation. For detailed information: [HRSA FY2022 Congressional Justification](#).

National Eye Institute (NEI)

As part of a 7.4% (\$3.2 billion) overall funding increase to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the President’s budget includes a 7.7% increase (\$64.3 million) to the NEI for a **total funding level of \$900 million** in FY 2022. The NEI was funded at \$835 million in FY21. For detailed information: [NEI FY2022 Congressional Justification](#).

Prevent Blindness FY2022 Advocacy Resources

For more information on Prevent Blindness’s advocacy on vision and eye health, please review our [2021 – 2022 Policy and Advocacy Overview](#) and visit [Improving Vision and Eye Health at the CDC](#).