

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***- Annual Patient Advocacy Event from Prevent Blindness Convenes Stakeholders  
in Eye Health to Discuss Issues Related to Access to Care, Health Equity,  
Funding Needs, with Nation’s Elected Officials -***

**CHICAGO (March 1, 2023)** – [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s leading nonprofit eye health and safety group, will be holding its eighteenth annual [Eyes on Capitol Hill](#) advocacy event on March 7-8, 2023. Entering its 115<sup>th</sup> year as a public health advocacy organization, Prevent Blindness once again will bring together patients, care partners, allied personnel, and medical professionals to speak directly with their elected officials to discuss a variety of vision and eye health issues, and the need for legislative and funding support.

Issues such as inequitable access to eyecare, health and income disparities, the negative impact of vision loss on independence and mental health, and the emotional and financial toll that eye diseases and conditions continue to impart, are just a few of the topics that Prevent Blindness continues to raise awareness and provide education on.

Eyes on Capitol Hill also provides an opportunity for participants of the Prevent Blindness [ASPECT \(Advocacy, Support, Perspective, Empowerment, Communication, and Training\) Patient Engagement Program](#) to share their stories with legislators and utilize other essential advocacy communication skills learned throughout the duration of their experience in the program. Prevent Blindness is pleased to welcome 34 new ASPECT-trained advocates and 22 returning ASPECT graduates to this year’s event. In addition, this is also the first year in which trainees of the new Eyes on Capitol Hill Team Leader Training Program will lead groups of advocates in meetings with Members of Congress. To prepare them for their leadership roles, Team Leaders go through extensive training to learn about the federal budget and appropriations process, the basics of public health, and how to coach advocates to improve their advocacy skills.

2023 Eyes on Capitol Hill advocates will specifically ask elected officials to:

- support a funding level of \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2024 for the Vision and Eye Health Budget Line, which provides federal funding for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s \(CDC\) Vision Health Initiative](#). The CDC’s Vision Health

Initiative (VHI) conducts national-level surveillance, engages in partnerships that promote early detection and connect people at high risk for eye diseases to eye care, and shares best practices with states and communities about incorporating vision and eye health into community-level interventions.

- maintain the current funding level of the CDC's glaucoma program at \$4 million in FY2024. This funding will allow the CDC to continue glaucoma detection, referral, and treatment programs through community-level partnerships that have successfully reached high-risk and underserved populations and connected them to glaucoma care.
- join the bipartisan, bicameral [Congressional Vision Caucus \(CVC\)](#), dedicated to strengthening and stimulating a national dialogue and policy on vision-related problems and disabilities. The mission of the CVC is to raise awareness about the increasing number of Americans at risk for age-related eye diseases and those who face vision loss due to chronic disease.

“The Eyes on Capitol Hill program provides our legislators a unique opportunity to truly understand how vision issues impact their constituents through the personal stories of patients, families, medical professionals and more,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “Now in our 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, we are proud to continue this legacy of patient advocacy and look forward to working with government officials to help save sight.”

For more information on Eyes on Capitol Hill, or Prevent Blindness and its advocacy initiatives, please visit [PreventBlindness.org/advocacy-initiatives/](https://PreventBlindness.org/advocacy-initiatives/).

### **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 screening and training, 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, visit us at [preventblindness.org](https://preventblindness.org), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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