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**PREVENT BLINDNESS AMERICA COMMENDS
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA FOR EXPANDING ACCESS TO
VISION CARE COVERAGE FOR CHILDREN**

***Additional \$32.8 billion in SCHIP Funding Gives Millions of Kids a Chance
at Brighter Future***

CHICAGO (Feb. 12, 2009) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and preserving sight, praised President Barack Obama for his public support of providing vision care to America’s underserved children. By allocating an additional \$32.8 billion for the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), health care, including vision care benefits, will now be available to approximately 11 million children across the country.

“No child should be falling behind at school because he can’t hear the teacher or see the blackboard. I refuse to accept that millions of our kids fail to reach their full potential because we fail to meet their basic needs,” said President Obama at the bill’s signing. “In a decent society, there are certain obligations that are not subject to tradeoffs or negotiation – health care for our children is one of those obligations.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only one in three children in America have received eye care services before the age of six. Yet, more than 12 million school-age children, or one in four, have some form of vision problem including amblyopia, strabismus or significant refractive error. Fortunately, many of these vision problems can be corrected through early detection and treatment.

“We know that the availability of much-needed government funds continues to dwindle as health care costs continue to spiral upward,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “We applaud President Obama and all those who worked to make this expansion of coverage possible for recognizing the importance of vision care for our most precious resource, our children.”

The newly expanded plan will now cover approximately 11 million children by 2013, up from the current 7 million. The plan seeks to bridge the ever-increasing gap for families whose incomes are too high for Medicaid but are unable to afford private insurance.

To find out more about children's eye health or how you can urge your government representatives to support sight-saving legislation, please call 800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America 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 America 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, divisions and chapters, it's 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 www.preventblindness.org.

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