

Joint Statement of the 2011 School Readiness Summit: Focus on Vision

We, the undersigned organizations, strongly agree with President Obama when he stated: “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 children fail to reach their full potential because we fail to meet their basic needs.”¹

We believe that healthy eyes and vision are important to a child's ability to succeed in school and later in life. With studies indicating that as much as 80 percent of learning done through the eyes², undetected and untreated eye and vision disorders in children, such as amblyopia and strabismus, can result in delayed reading and poorer outcomes in school.³

We understand that the asymptomatic nature of many eye disorders and recognize that most childhood vision problems can be prevented or treated effectively through early detection and follow-up care. Conversely, delayed diagnosis and treatment of vision problems in children can lead to vision loss, additional costly treatments, and missed learning and developmental opportunities.

We are concerned that undiagnosed and untreated vision problems among school-aged children in the United States is an urgent national public health challenge. With one in four school-aged children now suffering from a vision problem that could have been effectively treated if properly detected, it's clear the current system is broken.⁴

We support comprehensive eye exams for school-aged children as a foundation for a coordinated and improved approach to addressing children's vision and eye health issues and as a key element of ensuring school readiness in American children.

On behalf of the millions of children who, today, are not receiving the essential eye and vision health care services they need, we join together to urge a sustained and committed inter-disciplinary approach to eliminating untreated and undiagnosed vision problems from America's schools.

¹ Barack H. Obama (February 4, 2009). *Remarks on Signing the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009*.

² Guyton, Arthur C. & Hall, John E. (1996). *Human Physiology and Mechanisms of Disease*. Elsevier Health Sciences

³ Vaughn, W., Maples, W.C., & Hoenes, R. (2006) *The Association between Vision Quality of Life and Academics as Measured by the College of Optometrists in Vision Development Quality of Life Questionnaire*. *Optometry*, 77, 116-123.

⁴ Vision Council of America (2004). *Summary of Medical Literature on Vision Screening and Eye Exams*. First Vision Media Group