

We ask Congress to provide **\$5 MILLION** in FY 2021 to the CDC's Vision and Eye Health program to update national and state prevalence estimates of blinding eye diseases and vision impairment and slow the growing vision impairment and eye disease burden in the United States.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) addresses our national vision impairment and eye disease burden by conducting public health surveillance, research, and evidence-based public health interventions designed to complement state and community health efforts. Data from the most reliable surveillance and epidemiology tool available—the **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)**—is critical to the CDC. This data allows the CDC to track state-level data on vision loss and eye disease, evaluate variances across subgroups and demographics, and implement findings into evidence-based, strategic public health interventions to deploy at the state and community level.

National data on vision loss and eye diseases is more than 10 years old.

However, due to a severe lack of resources allocated to the CDC's vision and eye health programs through the federal appropriations process from FY 2011 through FY 2020, **the CDC has not been able to use NHANES to collect reliable prevalence data of vision impairment and eye disease since 2005 – 2008. This means that our best available data on our national vision**

loss and eye disease burden is over a decade old. Without updated and reliable data, we cannot begin to solve our burgeoning vision and eye health crisis. With a rapidly aging population and a working class that faces rising healthcare costs and chronic disease rates, the CDC needs current and accurate data to understand where gaps exist and how we can get ahead of these serious trends.

A 2016 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Making Eye Health a Population Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow* specifically names the CDC as vital to facilitating needed surveillance, public health research and interventions, and building state and local capacity to address vision and eye health at the community level.

With at least \$5 million appropriated to vision and eye health in FY2021, the CDC can:

- Resume use of the NHANES to collect data on prevalence of diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and vision loss
- Determine rates of vision and eye examinations and measurements of visual acuity, screening tests, and visual functioning assessment to determine gaps in access and patient education
- Bolster state capacity to respond to the needs of their communities with collaborative interventions and targeted strategies to improve vision and eye health at the state, local, or systems level.

