

We spend \$1 billion annually for the care of the blind for vocational rehabilitation, special schools, and textbooks. However, the entire budget for eye research in fiscal 1967 was little more than \$18 million and despite other Government funds and private sources, the total amount spent in the same fiscal year was still barely \$24 million.

In other words, less than 2½ percent of all money spent in fiscal 1967 in relation to visual problems was used to discover the physiological causes of eye disease and disorders.

It is obvious to me that this percentage is nowhere near sufficient. I strongly believe that we must concentrate more on curing substantial numbers of eye diseases—something which cannot occur without intensive research into the causes of those diseases.

This, in turn, will effectively reduce our expenditures to help those we cannot cure to adjust to a "seeing" society.

The establishment of a National Eye Institute as an independent research department would be a very significant step to finding a cure for visual disease.

I, of course, am not alone in this judgment. Fifty-one of our distinguished colleagues in the Senate have cosponsored a similar bill bill, S. 325. Several of our friends in the House of Representatives have also submitted bills similar in language and provisions to mine for consideration by this subcommittee.

Furthermore, this measure is very strongly supported by the Association for Research in Ophthalmology, the Wilmer Institute of Johns Hopkins University, Research To Prevent Blindness, many ophthalmology professors around the Nation, and many, many more.

I feel that the formal establishment of a separate National Eye Institute under the National Institutes of Health would be a vital step toward more intensive research into this vast health problem and eventual progress toward cures for a substantial portion of the 90 million Americans with vision problems.

When I introduced this bill, I did not feel it would be necessary for us to specifically mention optometrists since I thought that it would be clear to everyone that optometrists are necessary in the treatment of eye diseases and disorders.

However, to insure that the talents of all specialists in visual disorders cooperate in this effort to find the cause of blindness, I would like to suggest that my bill be amended as follows:

On page 2, line 15, after the words "except that," I propose the following:

(1) the council established under this section shall include members who are optometrists or representatives of professional optometric organizations, and

(2) on page 3, line 25, delete the period and the close quotation marks and add: "(including training, instruction, traineeships, and fellowships in optometry)."

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished colleagues, I cannot stress too strongly the need for such legislation as promptly as possible, and I respectfully urge favorable consideration of H.R. 586.

Mr. JARMAN. Are there any questions?

Mr. NELSEN. I have no questions but I want to thank our colleague for his appearance.