

I hope that the committee will take favorable action on this urgent measure.

Mr. JARMAN. Thank you Mr. Moss. Are there any questions? If not, we shall hear next from another colleague, the Honorable John Murphy, of New York. Please proceed, Mr. Murphy.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN M. MURPHY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK**

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee in support of H.R. 12843 and related bills to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the establishment of a National Eye Institute in the National Institutes of Health. As a cosponsor of this legislation I welcome the opportunity to present my views on it today.

There is ample precedent for establishing a National Eye Institute; a number of times in the past National Institutes have been established to study health problems of national significance, including Institutes for Cancer Research, Health Research, Dental Research, and others in the National Institutes of Health. I think the statistics on blindness and visual defects qualify this as a health problem of national significance.

In the United States over 1 million people are functionally blind and are unable to read ordinary newspaper type, even with the aid of glasses; another 1½ million are blind in one eye, and more than 30,000 people may be expected to lose their sight this year. But blindness is only the tragic result of a much wider problem. Nearly 90 million Americans have some form of eye trouble, and about 75 million wear glasses.

These are compelling reasons for establishing a national program of eye research, and such a program would have the strong support of the American people; a recent Gallup poll found that fear of blindness ranks second only to fear of cancer as "the worst thing that can happen." My congressional mail in support of this legislation substantiates this finding.

There is a program of eye research today on the national level which is a part of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, but I feel, as do a number of my colleagues, that this is and will continue to be a totally inadequate response to the problem.

Statistical evidence alone would indicate that little progress has been made, and the reason can be found in the fact that a number of important projects in eye research have been and are being postponed or abandoned because approved applications for NIH grants have not been funded. The effect of this is to create uncertainty about the eye research program which inhibits the activities of established researchers and discourages others from entering the field of eye research.

The reason for this failure is not a lack of will or competence on the part of the Neurological Diseases and Blindness Institute, because I am convinced that they are working to the best of their ability. But the present structure of the Institute and its many diverse commitments have not permitted an adequate recognition of important needs or stimulated sufficient action to meet the requirements of vision research.