

Mr. JARMAN. Mr. Kyros?

Mr. KYROS. I just want to join in your remarks, Mr. Chairman, and those of my colleagues and say to Mr. Nagle that I feel very deeply from his own personal experience, which he shared with us today and from the testimony we have heard before, I think this is most convincing evidence in regard to this bill.

Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. JARMAN. This concludes our committee hearing on this bill. The committee will stand adjourned.

(The following material was submitted for the record:)

STATEMENT OF IRVIN P. SCHLOSS, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST, AMERICAN
FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND, INC.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to have this opportunity to present the views of the American Foundation for the Blind in support of H.R. 12843, a bill which would establish a National Eye Institute as part of the National Institutes of Health.

In addition to representing the Foundation, which is the National research and consultant agency in the field of services to blind persons, I am also indicating the support for this legislation of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, American Association of Workers for the Blind, and Blinded Veterans Association. All four of these national organizations know the cost in dollars, dedication, and painstaking professional effort to assist blind persons to achieve self-care and self-support in spite of a severe handicap and lead productive, useful, and satisfying lives. They also know the cost in human misery of the failures—the blind persons who became of age or other factors are not employable or who cannot find jobs and must subsist on welfare payments.

Blindness and serious visual impairment are severely handicapping conditions which require highly skilled special education, mobility training, vocational rehabilitation, special reading material, and a number of ancillary services. The cost of providing these services by public and voluntary organizations is quite substantial. The cost of income maintenance and welfare programs alone for these individuals approaches \$150,000,000 annually.

According to the estimate of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness based on the Hurlin projection, there are approximately 450,000 persons within legal definition of blindness; i.e. visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses, or contraction of the visual field to 20 degrees or less. The National Society estimates that approximately 30,000 persons become legally blind each year. According to the National Center for Health Statistics of the U.S. Public Health Service, approximately 1,000,000 Americans cannot see enough to read ordinary newspaper print even with correcting glasses. It is also estimated that 90,000,000 persons have some degree of visual impairment.

Needless to say, prevention of blindness through effective research to determine the cause and cure of visual disorders and the application of the knowledge gained is essential to reduce the increasing number of blind persons in this country. The four national organizations I am representing firmly believe that the establishment of a National Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health will be the most effective way of focusing public interest and support for a concerted professional attack on the cause, cure, and prevention of blinding eye diseases and severe visual disorders. Such a concerted research effort is bound to have beneficial results as have similar intensive efforts in other areas of health concern. And we can confidently predict that the cost of such an effort will be more than offset by savings which result from a diminished need for specialized services.

Thanks to medical research, we are steadily prolonging the life span of the average American. However, we do not seem to be making progress in determining the cause, cure and prevention of glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy—the three leading causes of blindness in older persons. It is worth noting more than half of the blind population in this country is over 60 years of age. Let us continue to strive for our national goal of a long, full, and happy life for every American; but let us take steps to make sure that the retirement years of older Americans are not marred by the devastating effects of blindness.

We respectfully urge the Committee to take favorable action on H.R. 12843 as a means of establishing an effective mechanism which will ultimately make blindness a rare condition.