To: NAACP Seattle-King County General Assembly

From: M. Helen Spencer, Advisor, DCFS/AmeriCorps and UW School of Public Health Child Vision Projects; Katie Johnson, Teacher, Author of "Red Flags for Primary Teachers"

Date: March 24, 2014

Re: Stress on Children and Youth of Inadequate Vision Care

Our medical community has for decades failed to acknowledge or address the existence of a range of binocular vision issues, trouble children have with their eyes focusing quickly and comfortably together. Our schools test for distance vision, but not for how long a child can sustain focus at near range. Our work has convinced us that 25% of our children need help developing better vision skills and that our state has a number of specialists, developmental optometrist, with the interest and training to help our students learn to read more quickly and with better concentration and memory. Katie Johnson also works with young students, to help them develop the balance and coordination that go with good vision skills.

The national NAACP in 1999 passed a resolution that addressed the need to detect and treat "convergence insufficiency," the most common and well-known binocular problem. It recommended that incarcerated youth get vision assessments and the benefit of vision therapy, where indicated, to help them succeed in life and reduce recidivism. The 1999 resolution was almost entirely ignored. A 2010 resolution applauds the Obama administration for including a separate vision care benefit in the Affordable Care Act. Nonetheless, the ACA language does not include coverage for assessment and treatment of binocular problems.

We urge the Seattle-King County Chapter to adopt a resolution calling for inclusion of assessment and treatment of binocular vision problems in Washington State's Health Care Innovation Plan (SHCIP) and in implementation of the Affordable Care Act. We hope that members of your organization will help us our efforts to bring this critical matter to the attention of the Alaska, Oregon, Washington Area Conference as well. Your former Chairperson of the NAACP Education Committee, Reverend Phyllis Beaumont, has been following and supporting our efforts for the past two years and I know she wants this matter brought to your attention. My enclosed letters to Governor Inslee and to the President and CEO of Thrive to Five are our attempt to convey to policy makers the great unfairness of not acknowledging and addressing the poor vision care our children and youth are getting. Katie Johnson's letter and letters from Mary Pellicer, MD, and Thomas T. Lenart, MD, PhD, are also enclosed.