**National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts**

**2025 Resolutions**

**Resolution 2025-01: Regarding the Protection of the Civil Rights of Blind Parents in Massachusetts**

WHEREAS, blind individuals face unfair preconceived societal biases and antiquated attitudes regarding their ability to successfully parent their children; and

WHEREAS, blind individuals face these biases and preconceived attitudes in family and dependency law proceedings where custody and visitation are at stake and in public and private adoption, guardianship, and foster care proceedings; and

WHEREAS, because of these societal biases and antiquated attitudes, children of blind parents are unnecessarily being removed from their parents’ care or being restricted from enjoying meaningful time with their parents; and

WHEREAS, children are being denied the opportunity to enjoy the experience of living in loving homes with blind parents or other blind caretakers; and

WHEREAS, despite Massachusetts’ longstanding commitment to being a leader in inclusivity and breaking down barriers for people with disabilities, there is currently no state law in Massachusetts that specifically protects the rights of blind parents or parents with other disabilities from discrimination in child welfare and custody proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Nebraska, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah have all passed such legislation; and

WHEREAS, S. 1164, An Act Prohibiting Discrimination Against Adults with Disabilities in Family and Juvenile Court Proceedings, is critical legislation that seeks to ensure that adults with disabilities, including blind parents, are judged fairly and equitably by family and juvenile courts in legal proceedings, based on their actual ability to care for and support their children, rather than assumptions or prejudices regarding their disability; and

WHEREAS, The passage of S. 1164 will establish clear protections against discrimination, promote fair judicial practices, and uphold the principles of equal justice under the law for parents and caregivers with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The enactment of this legislation will further Massachusetts' commitment to disability rights and serve as a model for ensuring legal equity for parents with disabilities across the nation: now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts in convention assembled this sixteenth day of March, 2025, in the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, strongly urges the 194th Massachusetts General Court to pass S. 1164 without delay; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization calls upon legislators, disability rights organizations, legal professionals, and community advocates to actively support the passage of this vital legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization shall engage in public awareness campaigns, legislative outreach, and advocacy efforts to ensure that the rights of blind parents are protected and upheld.

**Resolution 2025-02: Regarding Sufficient Color Contrast for Accessibility**

WHEREAS, Websites, software applications, and all types of digital content are an essential part of modern living; and

WHEREAS, digital accessibility is a legal requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws; and

WHEREAS, most accessibility standards and recommendations primarily focus on non-visual access; and

WHEREAS, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) establish minimum color contrast ratios of 4.5:1 for small text and 3:1 for large text to improve readability for users with visual impairments; and

WHEREAS, these contrast levels, while beneficial, may still be insufficient for totally color blind individuals; and

WHEREAS, despite its importance, color contrast remains an often-overlooked aspect of accessibility; and

WHEREAS, insufficient color contrast renders content inaccessible: Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts, in convention assembled this sixteenth day of March, 2025, in the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, that this organization commits to ensuring all its digital content meets or exceeds the WCAG minimum contrast standards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization insists that all websites, software applications, and means of communication meet or surpass these minimum color contrast specifications.

**Resolution 2025-03: Regarding Reasonable Accommodations on the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure for Blind Test-Takers**

WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in exams administered by any private, state, or local government entity related to applications, licensing, certification, or credentialing for secondary or postsecondary education, professional, or trade purposes; and

WHEREAS, the ADA requires testing entities to provide reasonable accommodations to the regular testing environment and auxiliary aids and services that allow individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their true aptitude or achievement level on standardized exams or other high-stakes tests; and

WHEREAS, the ADA further requires testing entities to respond in a timely manner to requests for testing accommodations so as to ensure equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Justice is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the ADA that cover state and local government entities and private entities; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Department of Secondary Education (DESE) requires educators seeking PreK to grade 12 academic licenses in Massachusetts to pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL); and

WHEREAS, the MTEL is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in collaboration with Evaluation Systems, a division of Pearson, a multinational education company that provides standardized testing services; and

WHEREAS, both DESE and Evaluation Systems are obligated under the ADA to provide reasonable accommodations on the MTEL to testers with disabilities and to respond to requests for testing accommodations in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts who requested testing accommodations on the MTEL was forced to wait seven months for a response to her request for accommodations, when the website stated that the process would take 2-3 weeks; and

WHEREAS, a representative of Evaluation Systems informed this member that her request for testing accommodations was taking longer than usual because she had requested a Braille exam; and

WHEREAS, the ADA requires timely responses to requests for testing accommodations, regardless of the nature of the accommodation being requested; and

WHEREAS, the delay in receiving a response to the Federation member’s request for testing put her ability to take the MTEL on hold for months, which limited her employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, though Evaluation Systems approved the member’s request for extended time and for a Braille exam, Evaluation Systems denied the member’s request to take stop-the-clock breaks during the exam, meaning that she sat for the exam for eight hours with no breaks permitted, two days in a row; and

WHEREAS, this denial created an unequal testing experience for this member, because sighted test-takers who do not require the accommodation of extended time are permitted to take breaks every 2-3 hours during the standard exam administration; and

WHEREAS, blind people have historically faced discrimination in the education field, even though the blind are fully capable of becoming educators and teaching; and

WHEREAS, undue delays and denials of reasonable testing accommodations for blind individuals seeking to take the MTEL will further perpetuate discrimination against blind educators by creating barriers for the blind to obtain teaching licenses in Massachusetts: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts in convention assembled this sixteenth day of March, 2025, in the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, that we call upon DESE and Evaluation Systems/Pearson to provide reasonable accommodations on the MTEL to blind test-takers, including stop-the-clock breaks when such breaks are afforded to sighted test-takers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon DESE and Evaluation Systems/Pearson to review its response times for testing accommodations requests, particularly those requesting Braille exams, and ensure that requests are responded to in a timely manner, not to exceed one month; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we strongly urge the Department of Justice to investigate DESE and Evaluation Systems’ policies and practices concerning testing accommodations on the MTEL for test-takers with disabilities and ensure compliance with the requirements of the ADA.

**Resolution 2025-04: Regarding the Enforcement and Strengthening of Public Accommodation Protections for Guide Dog Users in Massachusetts**

WHEREAS, Massachusetts public accommodations laws prohibit discrimination against people in protected groups, including people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the fines and penalties for refusing access on the basis of use of a guide dog are substantially less than those for refusing access on the basis of disability (compare MGL c. 272 § 98 and 98A); and

WHEREAS, Guide dogs and other service animals continue to be denied access throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Guide dog and other service animal users continue to be denied access by rideshare drivers; and

WHEREAS, Rideshare companies frequently permit those drivers to continue operating on their platforms; Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Massachusetts in Convention assembled this 16th day of March, 2025, in the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, that guide dog and other service animal users must be allowed access to public accommodations, including transportation, throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the fines and penalties for denying access based on use of a service animal should be the same as those for denial of access based on disability, as they are inextricably linked; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization will work with other organizations and legislators to amend Massachusetts public accommodations laws to impose the same fines and penalties for those types of access denials; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization will work with other organizations and legislators to amend Massachusetts law to prohibit rideshare drivers from operating on rideshare platforms if they violate Massachusetts public accommodations laws; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization will work with other organizations and legislators to amend Massachusetts law to impose escalating fines on rideshare companies who fail to remove drivers from their platforms when those drivers violate Massachusetts public accommodations laws.