Mr. Jeff Bezos
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue North
Seattle, Washington 98109

Dear Mr. Bezos:

I have become aware that Amazon.com is undertaking a massive effort to deploy its Kindle e-readers and Kindle books to K-12 schools across the United States. Amazon has built a system called Whispercast that allows teachers and school administrators to distribute Kindle content to devices other than Kindles. The problem with all of these plans is that neither the Kindle devices nor the book files used in conjunction with them are accessible to students who are blind or who have other print disabilities. Even if a student has an accessible device like a personal computer, laptop, or iPad, he or she still will not be able to gain full access to these books. Although the books can be read aloud with text-to-speech, the student can’t use the access features of his or her device to learn proper spelling and punctuation, look up words in the dictionary, annotate or highlight significant passages, or take advantage of the many other features that Kindle devices and applications make available to sighted students. This is because Kindle books are designed so that the text is not exposed to screenreaders, like JAWS for Windows or Apple’s VoiceOver application, which are used by blind students. This also means that the text of Kindle books can’t be displayed on Braille devices. Listening is not reading; if students who can read Braille cannot access Kindle books in Braille, they are not reading.

Since school districts have an obligation under federal law to purchase or deploy only accessible technology and content, Amazon must either make Kindle books accessible or cease and desist from its efforts to have them used in the classroom. I sincerely hope that you will make the vast library of Kindle books available to all students, including those who are blind. If you do, you will be making history by providing more access to books for blind students than they have ever had in all of human history.

Sincerely,

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