National Federation of the Blind of Delaware

Resolution 2024-03

Regarding the Employment of Blind and Low-vision People at the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

WHEREAS, agencies for the blind are established to serve people who are blind; and

WHEREAS, an essential part of the governing structure of an agency for the blind is to include the processes, policies, and procedures that will ensure that the agency's administration comprehends the interests, needs, and aspirations of its constituency; and

WHEREAS, the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) has the stated mission of "providing educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments"; and

WHEREAS, the best people to determine the efficacy of policies, procedures and programs concerning people who are blind, are people who are blind; and

WHEREAS, there are currently no people who are blind in the administration of the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired; and

WHEREAS, blind employees of DVI make up a small percentage of agency employees; and

WHEREAS, even the technology used by the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired is not fully accessible to people using screen readers which makes it an unnecessarily difficult place for blind people to work; and

WHEREAS, leaders and members of the National Federation of the Blind of Delaware have brought these concerns to DVI leadership in meetings and communications since a Resolution on this subject was first adopted by our 2022 Convention, resulting in little to no substantive progress; and

WHEREAS, nearly 70 percent of blind people are unemployed, and DVI is in a unique position to improve this statistic by employing blind people within its own ranks: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, by the National Federation of the Blind of Delaware in Convention assembled this 26th day of October 20224 in the city of Middletown, that this organization strongly urges our Governor to appoint blind people to the leadership roles of Director and Deputy Director of the Delaware Division of the Visually Impaired, in consultation with representatives of Delaware's blind community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Governor to make such an appointment merit-based rather than political in order to maintain the stability and quality of the agency; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization strongly urges the Department of Health and Social Services to update the systems and technologies used by DVI to make them a model of an accessible workplace for all people, especially people who are blind; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization strongly urges DVI to recruit and hire more people who are blind/low vision in the administration, management, and throughout the entire organization, thereby ensuring that the agency promotes the growth and independence of the blind and including the lived experience of blind people at every level of the division, from policy making to services provided; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge DVI, DHSS and other relevant government agencies to enter into meaningful dialogues with leaders and members of the NFB of Delaware at the local and state level so that the concerns blind people have regarding the services being provided to them by DVI can be resolved.