Evan Low

Committee Chair

Assembly Business and Professions Committee

1020 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

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Dear Assemblymember \_\_\_:

Please oppose AB 1705, which would extend the term of the California State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind (Board) for four years.

At its convention in October 2015, the National Federation of the Blind of California (NFBC), an organization composed of blind Californians, voted to call on the legislature to sunset the Board. The Board was created in 1947 to address issues related to fraudulent guide dog trainers. Those issues no longer exist. Currently, United States and internationally guide dog schools subscribe to standards set by the International Federation of Guide Dogs (IGDF). Fourteen United States-based guide dog schools and eighty-five international guide dog schools subscribe to the standards and practices of the IGDF. Accreditation by the IGDF of any guide dog program is accepted globally as representing the highest standard any guide dog program can attain. California is the only state to create an additional set of parallel standards with which guide dogs schools must comply. The standards do not add anything to the existing IGDF standards. They are duplicative and create only an extra layer for guide dog schools to comply with for residents of California who have dogs from out of state schools who need help with their dogs while living in California.

Further, schools not licensed in California can only provide follow-up to residents of California. They cannot provide community-based or in-home training, which serves only to diminish the choices of consumers living in California, solely because they live in California. A consumer living in any other state in the United States can take advantage of in-home training opportunities which are only available from a few schools which are not all licensed in California. In-home training is important to people who have work or domestic responsibilities that prevent them from attending a residential program. Some consumers simply prefer to train with a dog in an environment with which they are comfortable and familiar. However, only a limited number of schools provide these opportunities because their programs are based upon a residential model, and it is more cost-effective to train users in this setting.

Finally, guide dog schools could better use the fees paid by their programs to the Board for consumers and their programs. There is no use for the fees paid to create an extra layer of regulation that add nothing to existing standards and practices.

Thank you.