**Brian Edward Norton**

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**April 22, 2024**

Re: Conklin Davis Center for the Visually Impaired

405 White Street, Daytona Beach, FL 32114

Dear Governor DeSantis:

I had normal vision for almost half of my life.

I grew up in Miami and resided with my parents in Coconut Grove on South Bayshore Drive. I attended nearby Silver Bluff Elementary and Ransom Everglades High School, where I graduated Valedictorian, school student President, Co-Captain of the Ransom swimming team, and Editor of our school newspaper. I then attended Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and University of Florida College of Law in Gainesville, Florida.

My father Dr. Edward Norton, was, by coincidence, the founder and longtime Director of the nationally prestigious Bascom Palmer Eye Institute (BPEI) of University of Miami Medical School. My father diagnosed me with retinitis pigmentosa (RP). I began to lose my peripheral vision at age 35. I progressively lost peripheral eyesight and became totally blind.

Since my diagnosis, I have been a patient and research subject in many experimental visual research projects at the BPEI for stem cell and optogenetic retinal therapies, none of which has been yet successful. My sister Patricia Norton still works as a supervisor at the BPEI. I am regularly in contact with other BPEI staff and other Florida ophthalmologists. I assist other persons with referrals for vision medical evaluation and treatments.

I decided to focus my legal employment on helping persons with employment discrimination, including employment of Floridians with physical challenges.

After working at the Florida Supreme Court and for the Florida

Attorney General, I worked as an associate and partner of several Tallahassee law firms focusing on federal court due process and employment discrimination, including disability violations in federal and state courts and Administrative hearings.

After becoming totally blind and could no longer independently research and draft pleadings, motions, and appellate briefs, I believed that I was no longer competent to represent clients to my standards of proficiency, and decided to lapse my active membership in the Florida Bar.

After the development of the internet, blind accessible technology, and internet legal research, , I entered the Daytona Center for Rehabilitation and training, graduated from the Daytona State College Paralegal Studies Program , and again took the several required Florida Bar exams. I was sworn again as a licensed attorney and now am working with the Regional Civil Conflict Counsel in Daytona Beach with my wonderful guide dog .

During my studies at Daytona State College and during my extensive preparation and review for the Florida Bar exams, I worked with technology experts at the Conklin Davis-Center for the Visually Impaired to improve my blind accessible technology.

I have continued to be involved in many voluntary associations assisting other blind Floridians. I have developed a good working relationship with DBS Director Robert Doyle,

District Director Ted Pobst and his local staff, and work with Director Ronee David at the Conklin Davis Center for the Visual Impaired as an active board member.

I strongly support the Conklin Davis Center and its invaluable contributions to blind Floridians. I am continually impressed by the commitment, compassion, and professionalism of the Conklin Davis Center’s team. I wholeheartedly believe in the mission and vision of the Conklin Davis Center, and I am proud to offer my support in any way possible. I am confident that with continued community backing, the Conklin Davis Center will continue to thrive and make a lasting difference in the lives of those they serve.

Thank you for your leadership and your dedication to the blind community of Florida.

Sincerely,

Brian Edward Norton

Florida Bar #1033481

NFBF Greater Daytona Beach President

Conklin Davis Center for the visually Impaired Board

Assistant Regional Conflict Counsel Florida District5

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“Kindness is an Attitude the Blind can See and the Deaf can Hear”- Mark Twain