Dear Congressman/woman/Senator:

My name is Camille Tate. I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind. We are in Washington, D.c., working on our legislative priorities for 2018.

 On our agenda are bills that will help bring equality in employment, education and civil rights to blind Americans across the nation. Please take a moment to read through our priorities.

* Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM Hi): H. R. 1772, S. 2138. Electronic instructional materials have made obtaining an education an easier task. However, for students with a print disability, these materials, whether as e-books or in digitized format, continue to be inaccessible. Often, students must wait weeks into a course to receive textbooks or other materials; or, the online classroom is inaccessible with assistive technology designed to work on electronic devices. The AIM Hi Act improves blind students’ access to course material and lowers litigation against schools that do not have accessible course materials.
* Access Technology Affordability (ATAA) Act: H. R. 1734, S. 732. As of this date, access technology is cost prohibitive for many Americans who require this technology to survive in today’s rapidly digitized society. The ATAA will promote affordability for blind Americans to procure access technology that will improve their educational and employment opportunityes.
* ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017: H. R. 620. We oppose H. R. 620 because it would erode the equal access and protections guaranteed in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The “substantial progress” within the bbill is undefined and subjective, which could further delay a business to make access changes and continue to deny access to a disabled person for years. For example, a person seeks medical treatment at a facility approved by their insurance. This person, bound to a wheelchair, encounters a building that is not fitted with a wheelchair ramp, or any other access device suitable for a wheelchair user. Is this person supposed to wait for the facility to make “substantial progress” that could take years?
* Marrakesh Treaty (for Senators only-this bill has not been assigned a bill number in the House or Senate): The blind, low vision or otherwise print disabled in the U. S. currently have access to only 5% of the world’s published works. As a signatory to this treaty, print disabled Americans will be able to access content , in accessible format, across borders and in foreign languages, which will be beneficial to students who often are unable to obtain these necessary materials in a timely fashion.

As you can see, Congressman/woman/Senator, our priorities are engendered to bring equality and opportunity to blind Americans. We ask that you think about the blind Americans and their equal access needs in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Camille Tate