Resolution 2024-02 Regarding Consolidation of Blindness Services Under a General Disability Services Agency

WHEREAS, each state in the United States of America is required to have a state rehabilitation agency to serve the vocational, educational and independent living training of disabled people; and,

WHEREAS, these state agencies also serve the needs of blind people; and,

WHEREAS, Congress has long acknowledged that blind people have certain specialized needs, including training methods and equipment and Congress also has recognized these specialized, separate needs under Title 29 USC Section 701(a) (1) (A) as amended, in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and,

WHEREAS, blind people received more effective, quality services under this separation; and,

WHEREAS, consolidating services for blind people with a general agency for all disabled people may seem like an efficient, effective and streamlined method for serving the needs of all disabled people, but in reality, it does not; and,

WHEREAS, the specialized nature of the needs of blind people includes orientation and mobility, independent living skills, educational needs (with technology and Braille) and employment requirements; and,

WHEREAS, administering programs for disabled people where all disabilities are lumped into one agency will decrease and diminish the overall effectiveness of those programs for disabled people; and,

WHEREAS, due to the unique needs of blind people, which differs from the needs of the wheelchair-bound, deaf/hard of hearing, cognitively impaired or any other disability group, effective training will be diminished; and,

WHEREAS, the needs for blind people will not be met with a “one size fits all” approach as each blind person will have targeted needs; and,

WHEREAS, the training needs of each disability will vary by disability, for example, teaching orientation and mobility to a person who is wheelchair-bound will be different from a blind person;

Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Florida, in convention assembled this 10th day of November 2024, in the City of Jacksonville, Florida, we strongly urge the Florida Legislature to keep agencies serving blind people separate from any general agency serving disabled people; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we urge the Florida Legislature and Agencies Serving the Blind in Florida to work with the National Federation of the Blind of Florida to build an effective agency to serve the blind population in Florida; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we strongly urge all agencies serving blind people in Florida to have adequate representation (50% or more) of blind people on their governing boards.