

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Ron DeSantis

The Capitol

Tallahassee, FL

Subject: TD Tampa Bay

Dear Governor DeSantis,

We, the National Federation of the Blind, are a nonprofit organization consisting of constituents residing in the state of Florida. We are writing this letter to advocate for the reinstatement of the budget for TD Tampa Bay.

A city's transportation network has been described as its cardiovascular system, allowing for a city's continuous success through the flow of goods and people. Subsequently, those living with disabilities endure transportation barriers that hinder their success; and in turn hindering the city's success. Such barriers include limited access and limited income.

TD Tampa Bay removes these barriers by providing a reasonable cost for door-to-door transportation across Tampa's counties for all those living with disabilities. This provides individuals with disabilities with more employment and college options. As well as an increase of discretionary income to spend and access to a range of businesses. Consequently, the flow of people and services in Tampa are stimulated, and so is the local economy.

In conclusion, there are a great deal of benefits from reinstating TD Tampa Bay. Therefore, we humbly ask for your continued benevolence by signing the budget to fund TD Tampa Bay.

Please find testimonials from fellow disabled and non-disabled residents of Tampa, Florida speaking on their positive experiences with TD Tampa Bay on the following page.

We appreciate your time and effort.

Sincerely,

National Federation of the Blind

Tampa Chapter

Tampa, FL

Nfbf.tampa@gmail.com

## Testimonials

TD Tampa Bay allowed me to travel across five different counties for doctors appointments, shopping to increase the economy, and to visit with friends and family. This is a valuable service not only for myself, but for those who are disabled ,elderly, and financially needy. Please sign this program into your budget. Thank you

- Miranda Kilby  
Tampa Bay Chapter President of the National Federation Of The Blind of Florida

As a parent, TD Tampa Bay allowed me to provide experiences for my family. This included, but not limited to, the beaches, the theater, small businesses and so much more. TV Tampa Bay is a valuable service that is needed within the five counties, Pinellas, Hillsboro, Pasco, Hernando, and Manatee. Please keep the budget for the service to allow the individuals like myself and so many others to continue to live the life they want.

- Paul Martinez  
President, National Federation Of The Blind of Florida

TD has helped our family in the following ways:

1. My Wife, to get to medical appointments at Tampa General, and the surrounding areas, as all her care is through TGH/USF
2. My Wife having a greater sense of independence, being able to do a lot more on her own, including getting to Tampa for religious services and programs.
3. My Wife having a more robust social life, being that she is able to see her friends and family, even when I'm working.
4. My Wife being able to get to the office in Tampa to work, and be more productive with her colleagues.
5. Myself being able to work and contribute without having to take time off, to get her to these important commitments.

Please consider how this important service has helped those in need. It is extremely important, for any individual, especially someone with a vision impairment, to free and independent. This service is the roots to a flourishing state, connected not divided.

- Joshua Dabiew  
315-250-9729

As a disabled student, TD Tampa Bay provided me the independence I yearned for and the opportunities I needed. Over time, Uber and Lyft can get too pricey and family isn't always available to be a personal chauffeur. So, it was amazing to have a transportation that allowed me to leave my house more often to run errands, socialize with friends in other counties, and take more job interviews.

- Sewar Quneibi  
Tampa, FL 33617

The TD Tampa Bay service has provided me with a tremendous amount of independence.

Florida has some amazing beaches that should be enjoyed by all of its citizens and visitors. Before this service was provided, I had not been to the beach for two years. Not only was I able to enjoy the beach but to spend money at the establishments nearby.

Along those same lines were trips to popular attractions that were outside of Hillsborough County where I lived. One such excursion was to the Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs. My friends and I were able to enjoy the atmosphere, eat at local restaurants, and purchase items unique to the sponge docks. TD Tampa Bay allowed those of us with disabilities to experience more of Florida than we otherwise could not.

Td Tampa Bay also provided me rides to a job at the Strawberry Festival, which I loved. Without this service that job would not have been available to me.

I was also able to visit friends and relatives in other counties and go to doctors' appointments outside of Hillsborough County. The service provided a choice of the medical care that I wanted. It gave me a voice in my own care.

TD Tampa Bay is a much-needed service for me and others with disabilities who cannot drive. It offers social opportunities, spending opportunities, employment possibilities, and medical choices

- Debbie Malone

Being a visually impaired individual, without the ability to drive, living in Clearwater; has been extremely difficult, since you cut the budget and were forced to stop TD transportation services.

All of my medical appointments are at Tampa General, or on the USF Campus; most being 1+hr away. The individuals in my life, that have the ability to help me, work, and it makes it a huge burden figuring out how I am going to make it to simple tasks, most people don't even think

twice about, such as a Medical appointment. The other options, such as Uber or Lyft are very costly.

I am also working hard to get back to work, and the office of my employer, is located in Tampa. That being said, it would not be an option for me to get into the office, potentially resulting in them not accepting those terms, resulting in loss of employment. All due to not being able to get to my job, not my ability to perform.

Please consider my plea, for reinstating the budget for the TD transportation service.

I am an active 35 year old woman and want to live a full life that contributes to this great state and Nation. I love Florida, and feel a great sense of Pride in living here, knowing how they take care of their citizens, especially those of us that have a little different needs. We just need the tools to be able to succeed.

It's also a very important part of our social structure. My visually impaired friends, live far, one in NPR. For us to be able to get together, it's near impossible, or costs a fortune. I implore you, to think of your day, without the ability to drive. Would you be able to get done and accomplish what is needed and necessary?

I personally cannot, due to the removal of this service. I love my independence and I believe with TD being reinstated it would give not only myself, but countless individuals the ability to keep our lives full and vibrant.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my thoughts and plight regarding TD, it's appreciated.

- Christine Copley  
813.493.7691  
1926 Valencia Way  
Clearwater, FL 33764

It is imperative that the state fund the TD Tampa Bay transportation service for a myriad of reasons. One of the most basic is to facilitate employment for disabled persons in the state. For the visual-impaired, like myself, the unemployment rate averages 70% even in good economic times. I was fortunate to secure a new job last year and the TD Tampa Bay service was vital to me fulfilling the requirements of my job to travel to various counties. Employment and transportation are two of the most vital needs for the disabled and TD Tampa Bay allows us to solve these two problems. Please continue to fund this essential program. It means positive economic impact for the state and financial and personal independence for the disabled.

- G. Deon Bradley

