**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Michigan Commission for the Blind Director
Attacks Michigan’s Organized Blind**

***National Federation of the Blind of Michigan Accuses Director of Abuse of Power***

**Dearborn Heights, Michigan (January 28, 2010):** Patrick Cannon, director of the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB), has notified Christine Boone, director of the Michigan Commission for the Blind Training Center (MCBTC) in Kalamazoo, and a member of the National Federation of the Blind, that her employment is terminated as of today. This action follows closely on the heels of the firing of another member of the National Federation of the Blind, David Robinson, an employee of the Commission’s Business Enterprise program in Lansing. Robinson was fired last month.

In Respons to these outrageous actions, the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan will hold a rally and picket at 201 N. Washington Square, the Victor Building, the headquarters of the Michigan Commission for the Blind. The rally will take place from 11:00 to 1:00 pm Friday, January 29, 2010.

In addition to these firings, Cannon has worked through the Governor’s ethics board to remove a blind commissioner from the Commission board for speaking out on behalf of the rights of blind consumers to participate in policy development. He has also presided over the mass removal of blind entrepreneurs from the Commission’s Business Enterprise program. His actions have resulted in a flurry of legal complaints by blind individuals. In the past Cannon has orchestrated the removal by non-reappointment of two other commissioners who questioned programs at the Commission.

Larry Posont, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan, said: “The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan is convinced that Mr. Cannon’s recent actions are an unwarranted abuse of power and amount to intimidation and bullying of blind citizens of Michigan who dare to speak for themselves and question his policies. His firing of Christine Boone is particularly suspicious given that his administration of MCB programs has been called into question by a recent federal audit. Among all the Commission’s programs, only the MCBTC was cited for good quality management. Christine Boone has been doing an exemplary job of creating a quality training program for blind individuals that sets high expectations for students, instills in them a positive philosophy of blindness, and helps them to compete for quality jobs in the labor market. Mr. Cannon is using trumped-up charges about a single aspect of the training program in order to discredit Ms. Boone. It is clear to us that Mr. Cannon, who served on Governor Granholm’s transition team and loves to boast of his connections to her, is using his political influence to cover up his management problems and to intimidate those who speak up about poor performance at the Commission.”

Mr. Cannon’s termination of Ms. Boone appears to stem from her establishment of a marksmanship program to build the confidence of her students. Michigan has a deeply rooted outdoor culture. Many people who lose their eyesight feel they are no longer able to live a fulfilling life. Boon developed a marksman program using pellet rifles to teach newly-blinded people that they can, indeed, enjoy the outdoors and live a satisfying and productive life. The activity took place in a secluded area of the property near the MCBTC. Under Michigan law, a pellet gun is not a firearm if under .177 caliber. There was no danger to people or property created by the activity, which was supervised by a qualified instructor.

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**About the National Federation of the Blind of Michigan**

The National Federation of the Blind of Michigan (NFBM) is a proud affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. Originally founded in 1941, the NFBM has been a leader in advocacy and has worked tirelessly to change what it means to be blind in Michigan. Among our accomplishments: bringing NFB-NEWSLINE® to Michigan, establishing the Michigan Commission for the Blind, white cane legislation, Braille literacy for blind children legislation, and much more.