# **The Reduction in Force (RIF) at the Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Office for Civil Rights will Decimate In-State Services for People with Disabilities**

## **The RIF will Decimate Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Programs in Every State by:**

* Disrupting funding and eliminating meaningful practices and institutional knowledge for special education and related services for children with disabilities, including funding for teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, and other support personnel.
* Disrupting funding and eliminating meaningful practices and institutional knowledge for preschool programs for children with disabilities.
* Disrupting funding for competitive grants for training, technical assistance, and technology to improve services for students with disabilities.

## **The RIF will Decimate Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Programs in Every State by:**

* Disrupting federal match funding and eliminating meaningful practices and institutional knowledge for state vocational rehabilitation programs, making these programs unsustainable, which will in turn mean that:
* American adults with disabilities will not be able to receive employment training.
* American youth with disabilities will not be able to receive transition to employment or transition to college training.
* Employers will be unable to seek assistance in finding qualified disabled employees.
* State-level employees who administer these programs will be furloughed or lose their jobs entirely.
* Disrupting funding and eliminating meaningful practices and institutional knowledge for the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind program will mean that older blind Americans may be forced into nursing homes.

## **The RIF will Decimate the Randolph-Sheppard Program, Affecting the Employment of Blind Entrepreneurs in Nearly Every State, by:**

* Eliminating positions critical to approving requests that allow states to purchase needed equipment for Randolph-Sheppard Program vendors.
* Eliminating positions critical to approving changes in state rules, policies, or programs concerning the implementation of Randolph-Sheppard in states.
* Eliminating technical assistance programs for state licensing agencies or elected committees.
* Eliminating positions critical to processing state arbitration complaints.
* Eliminating positions that could help with agency issues, which will in turn lead to more arbitration cases.
* Eliminating positions that would help modernize the program.

## **The RIF will Decimate Office for Civil Rights Enforcement of Disability Rights Laws in Every State by:**

* Discontinuing operations at twelve field offices across the country which employ hundreds of people who process over twenty thousand complaints each year.
* Severely reducing the capacity to investigate and enforce the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in federally funded educational institutions, including requiring effective communication, the provision of Braille, large print, and audio, and reasonable accommodations in K-12 and higher education.
* Severely reducing the capacity to investigate and enforce Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in state and local educational and other programs, including effective communication, the provision of Braille, large print, and audio, and reasonable accommodations.

**Reduction or elimination of the services provided by any of these programs will be catastrophic to the blind across the country.**

**Below are a few testimonies from real blind Americans who have greatly benefitted from each of the above programs.**

*“I attended public school in Durant, Iowa – a very rural school district. I was incredibly blessed to begin learning Braille and how to use accessible technology tools to access a computer at a young age. As a result of my terrific elementary school education, I thrived in high school and was able to go to college, where I earned dual degrees in English and Theatre. I am now employed and can proudly share that I pay both federal and FICA taxes.”* – **Elizabeth, from Durant, Iowa**

*“I was able to go to a training center in Ruston, Louisiana, where I learned independent living skills and how to be a productive citizen. Because of my training, I have been a small business owner in the tech sector for more than thirty years.”* – **Karl, a blind business owner in Taylorsville, Utah**

*“For twenty-one years, I have owned and operated a successful dining food facility and housekeeping service at the US Coast Guard Aviation Training Center because of the Randolph-Sheppard program. My business helps employ twenty employees while providing our Coast Guard personnel with the food and accommodations they need to defend our nation.”* – **Barbara, a blind business owner in Mobile, Alabama**

**Ensure that these critical programs for Americans with disabilities in all fifty states will be able to operate by rescinding the reduction in force at the Department of Education!**