Resolution 2020-3

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WEBSITE AND OTHER WEBSITES SPONSERED by THE Commonwealth

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia offers a great deal of information to the public through internet websites; and

WHEREAS, persons who are blind, visually impaired, and have other disabilities should have the same opportunity to benefit from contents of websites developed by entities of the Commonwealth of Virginia as persons who are not disabled; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) offers an extensive website containing information designed for use by Virginians during this global pandemic, including a data dashboard demonstrating Coronavirus incidence and trends on a daily basis by county and independent cities, as well as additional information which is not accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired; and

WHEREAS, for more than three months during the spring and summer of 2020, the VDH did not respond for requests by the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia to work with them to make their website accessible; and

WHEREAS, the government of the Commonwealth of Virginia has an obligation under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Virginians With Disabilities Act to make its websites accessible and useable to persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, beginning in September 2020, the VDH began to work closely with the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia to make their Coronavirus Dashboard accessible by holding Zoom meetings at the highest VDH information technology (IT) staff levels as well as with the Commonwealth’s Chief Data Officer and members of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, since then, the VDH Information Technology staff appear to be making a good faith effort to work with us to incorporate our changes in this complex dashboard to enhance its accessibility: NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, in convention assembled this first day of November, 2020, that this organization commend VDH for its recent forthright and good faith efforts to work with us to make its Coronavirus dashboard accessible and useable for persons with disabilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia urge the VDH and all other Virginia State Agencies to make the entirety of their websites accessible and useable for blind persons and others with disabilities in accordance with the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines  2.1](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)

(WCAG 2.1); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia urge each state agency to designate an agency high level official to ensure website accessibility, and that this individual’s name and contact information be prominently displayed on each agency’s website with instructions regarding how to bring accessibility issues to this individual’s attention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia urges Virginia’s Chief Data Officer to make web accessibility training a priority for the Commonwealth and offer it widely to information technology staff; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia urges the Virginia General Assembly to enact legislation to clearly define and ensure accessibility of state websites.