



Proponent Testimony: House Bill 586

House State and Local Government Committee

Aaron Bley, Vice President of Community Relations, Cincinnati Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 586. My name is Aaron Bley, and I am the Vice President of Community Relations with the Cincinnati Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CABVI).

CABVI is a private, not-for-profit organization offering comprehensive vision rehabilitation services for people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired. In addition to our Vision Services, CABVI also operates a variety of Social Enterprises to help provide employment opportunities to people who are blind and visually impaired in our community. A Social Enterprise is a business that operates to further a social mission; for us, that means helping **to reduce the 70% unemployment rate** for people who are blind or visually impaired by providing meaningful employment and training, which enables our employees to live fuller, more independent lives.

Since 1911, CABVI's blind and visually impaired employees have been producing top-quality goods in a light industrial manufacturing setting. We continue this tradition in our Industries Program today, offering our employees opportunities to learn job skills and receive on-the-job training to help them achieve a fulfilling career and greater independence. Our Core Capabilities include converting mill-sized rolls of paper and tapes into individual, retail-friendly products. Other capabilities include assembly, packaging, slitting, rewinding, and kitting.

A number of the products we manufacture and/or distribute are sold to the state and political subdivisions through Ohio's Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP). This includes products such as hand sanitizer, batteries, paper rolls, and photoluminescent exit and safety signs. We also provide mail fulfillment services for Tourism Ohio.

We are very appreciative of the partnership that exists through the CRP program, and support efforts to strengthen the program through House Bill 586. The bill would reinforce the legislature's intent that all agency contracts must go through the CRP program. This is accomplished by clarifying that RFPs that include any CRP eligible good or service in whole or in part, must allow nonprofit agencies that employ individuals with work-limiting disabilities the first opportunity to service a contract.

I ask for your support of this bill that helps to empower and employ individuals with disabilities in Ohio.