

## COMMUNICATION & FREEDOM

My name is Bobby Ringle, a Deaf Ohioan and CONCERNED for my fellow Deaf Blind Ohioan's future.

All, if not most, DeafBlind Ohioans are lacking two critical components of life; Communication and Freedom. Without them, they are "stuck" at home, afraid to come out and enjoy the world around them.

As a Deaf person, the world around me is tough enough to navigate and survive, which I'm barely doing. I can't imagine what it is like for Deaf Blind people.

Deaf blindness is a rare condition in which an individual has combined hearing and vision loss, limiting access to both auditory and visual information. People who are Deaf Blind, due to this combination, have unique needs related to communication, mobility, accessing information, and social interaction, requiring specialized support and strategies.

I was a part of the two-year pilot program which was run by the Columbus Speech and Hearing Center, providing Support Service Providers (SSPs) for 33 Deaf Blind individuals. They were able to communicate with the people around them. The smiles and silent laughter told me that they were enjoying their newfound freedom. They rely on their Support Service Providers (SSPs) for tasks like guiding them through unfamiliar environments and facilitating communication. The SSPs create and provide a safe and predictable environment with clear pathways and reduced clutter, providing opportunities for sensory exploration and engagement, helping their client learn and interact with the world around them.

We need permanent funding for services to keep this basic quality of life.

There are at least 84, 797 Deaf Blind Ohioans in need of communication and freedom.

You have your communication modes and your freedom, what about them?

Please add the HB 96 DeafBlind Fund to the budget.

If I can be of any assistance, please let me know and I will be more than happy to testify on behalf of DeafBlind Ohioans.

Sincerely,  
Robert D. Ringle Jr. (Bobby)