

Billie Graham

4130 E. 146th Street W. 34th Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44128

March 30, 2025

Dear Honorable Kent Smith,

My name is Billie Graham. I am DeafBlind resident in your community.

I am writing to ask for your support for an amendment to HB 96—the DeafBlind Fund. The fund has support of Republicans and Democrats. Both Representatives Jeff LaRe (R) and Crystal Lett (D) have drafted amendments to continue the important services for DeafBlind Ohioans through the GRF 415515 DeafBlind Fund.

For the past year and a half, the DeafBlind Fund has been used for a Support Service Provider (SSP), or CoNavigator (CN), Pilot Program. This program has allowed DeafBlind individuals to take part in our community and function independently doing necessary tasks. The fund was first added in the 2024-2025 Ohio Biennial Budget with support from Republicans and Democrats and signed by Governor DeWine. Hence, the DeafBlind Fund was under Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. The fund was administered by the Columbus Speech & Hearing Center (CSH).

We as DeafBlind citizens are concerned for our future. We need permanent funding for services to keep this basic quality of life.

I would greatly appreciate your support with the HB 96 DeafBlind Fund. And I would greatly appreciate your support in finding a permanent solution for services to our underserved DeafBlind Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Billie Graham

National Federation of the Blind of Ohio