

NDAB Resolution 2024-01:

State 2025-2027 Biennial Appropriation for North Dakota Vision Services / School for the Blind (NDVS/SB)

Whereas, in 2022 population statistics indicate that there were 779,261 North Dakota residents. Conservative studies consistently demonstrate that 3.3% among the general population have medical conditions which mildly, moderately, or severely compromise their eyesight, meaning there is a significant number of North Dakotans affected by uncorrectable sight loss; and,

Whereas our state's population has risen by more than 50,000 over the last decade and the percentage of people in the older sectors of our population that do experience a higher incidence of eye maladies has risen significantly; and,

Whereas the loss of eyesight is a major life-altering disability that requires specialized and specific rehabilitation skills training to help people of any age cope with this condition; and,

Whereas, North Dakota Vision Services / School for the Blind in Grand Forks has the components for a comprehensive center-based blindness specific rehabilitation training program, is recognized regionally and nationally as a program of excellence and high quality, has the capability and capacity that allows it to serve people of all ages (i.e., has both children and adult oriented training programs); and,

Whereas children and adults with sight loss, who receive a regimen of specific, comprehensive, intensive center-based blindness skills training, such as that which is available at NDVS/SB, are employable and are capable of functioning with a high degree of independence.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by North Dakota Association of the Blind, that we, in Convention assembled at the Enchanted Castle in Regent , ND on Sunday, June 9, 2024, strongly urge the newly elected Governor and the 69th North Dakota Legislative Assembly, scheduled to convene on January 7, 2025, to maintain and increase the appropriation for North Dakota Vision Services / School for the Blind (HB1013) in the state budget which is adopted for the 2025 -2027 biennium so that the NDVS/SB appropriation will,

- Maintain funding for all the current professional positions serving children and adults across the state to ensure that the frequency and intensity of services required to attain their goals is met.
- To meet an increased demand for service, 1.5 FTE'S be added to the NDVS/SB NDVS/SB professional service staff.
- That Increased funding be provided for the temporary salary allotment to maintain the appropriate number of part-time employees that work evenings and overnight during short-term programs for students and adults who come to the training center for intensive instruction.
- Increase the operating portion of the NDVS/SB budget to appropriately adjust for greater costs of service-related travel, maintenance of the facility, purchase of modern technology, and for essential professional staff development.