Iowa Council of the United Blind

Resolution 2024-1

Subject: Recognition of the Excellent Work of the Iowa Department for the Blind Library for the Blind and Print Disabled

Whereas, the Iowa Department for the Blind Library for the Blind and Print Disabled has provided over six decades of excellent services to the blind and print disabled residents of Iowa; and

Whereas, the Library is often the first service through which clients have contact with the Department; and

Whereas, access to such reading materials as books, magazines, music and other items provide many blind Iowans with the first step in realizing they have the potential to develop the skills that will allow them to live the lives they choose; and

Whereas, the Library has been staffed with many dedicated, hard-working employees and volunteers - many of whom are at this convention and are members of ICUB; and

Whereas, during the pandemic shutdown of 2020 when many libraries for the blind across the country were closed and unable to serve their patrons, the library never missed a day of fulfilling patron requests and shipping out materials; and

Whereas, the Library staff developed the process of “super-dupe”—now used by many libraries for the blind throughout the country - allowing them to download up to twenty books on a single cartridge, saving money and providing better service; and

Whereas, the Library has expanded outreach efforts that provide creative library services and educational tools to borrowers of all ages, including the Peek-a-Box for Adults and Braille, STEM, and career exploration training for school-age children; and

Whereas, the Library has implemented the Athena data management system, which gives real-time access to project management to schools, teachers and vendors, thereby streamlining document development and saving money; and

Whereas, the Library was chosen as one of the first libraries in the country to distribute Braille eReaders to patrons, thus bringing a new and exciting Braille-reading device to its borrowers; and

Whereas, as a result of these and many other accomplishments, the Library was recognized in 2021 as the top-rated library for the blind in the country by the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.

Now therefore be it resolved by the Iowa Council of the United Blind in convention assembled this 24th day of August, 2024, in the city of Ankeny, Iowa, that our organization and members strongly express our gratitude for the outstanding efforts of the library staff and volunteers past and present for the work they have performed in making our lives better through communicating with the world of words; and

Be it further resolved that the President of ICUB present this resolution to the Library Director to be shared with the library staff and volunteers to acknowledge and commend them for the life-changing work they perform.

Iowa Council of the United Blind

Resolution 2024-2

Subject: Overhaul of the Iowa Department for the Blind Website

Whereas, an organization’s website is its public face, thereby making that agency responsible for ensuring that its website clearly presents its mission, programs, services, and other pertinent information, and that it keeps its website accurate, up-to-date, and easy-to-use; and

Whereas, the website of the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) reflects poorly on the agency, even though the site claimed in June 2023 to be in the process of being updated “to create a more streamlined experience,” although it has made little discernable progress in achieving this goal; and

Whereas, for example, a full list of IDB programs and services and links to more information about them does not appear on the home page, some links throughout the site are broken, some information is inconsistent and out-of-date, and the audio and text transcripts of the personal interviews gathered as part of the Iowa Blind History Project have been removed; and

Whereas, because of these deficiencies, the website reflects poorly on the IDB and its distinguished reputation, giving users the impression that the agency lacks in effective programs, services, and organization, thereby being of little value to those seeking blindness-related information and services.

Now therefore be it resolved by the Iowa Council of the United Blind in convention assembled this 24th day of August, 2024, in the city of Ankeny, Iowa, that the IDB overhaul and then constantly maintain its website so that the information it presents is organized, accurate, up-to-date, easy to use, and fully accessible; and

Be it further resolved that this overhaul be done with the highest of standards so that the website reflects positively on the IDB and its programs and services; and

Be it further resolved that, because of the importance of preserving Iowa’s blindness history, all documents from the Iowa Blind History Project, including audio and text transcripts of personal interviews, be fully restored to the website; and

Be it further resolved that all other historical documents, objects, films, images, photos, and other relevant materials in the Department’s possession be archived, stored, and indexed in such a manner that they are preserved and easily located; and

Be it further resolved that the ICUB President send a copy of this resolution by September 15, 2024, to the IDB Acting Director, Program Administrators, and Commissioners along with a letter asking them to develop and carry out an action plan addressing these concerns.

Iowa Council of the United Blind

Resolution 2024-3

Subject: Celebration of the Centennial of the Iowa Department for the Blind

Whereas, the Iowa Commission for the Blind - now the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) - was established in April 1925; and

Whereas, the Department has provided a variety of effective, innovative, and nationally recognized services to blind Iowans, including blindness training, employment, technology, and library, that have enhanced their ability to live independently and work competitively; and

Whereas, many ICUB members have been positively impacted by the IDB as clients, employees, and volunteers; and

Whereas, ICUB has partnered with the Department on many activities to promote IDB’s mission and positive approach to blindness, in order to demonstrate to sighted and blind people alike that the blind can live full and active lives with vision loss.

Now therefore be it resolved by the Iowa Council of the United Blind in convention assembled this 24th day of August, 2024, in the city of Ankeny, Iowa, that this organization congratulate the Iowa Department for the Blind on its one hundred years of excellent service to blind Iowans; and

Be it further resolved that ICUB continue to dedicate itself to working with the Department in providing training and education to all Iowans based on valid information about blindness; and

Be it further resolved that the ICUB president present this resolution to the IDB Director and that the Director share it with all staff.

Iowa Council of the United Blind

Resolution 2024-4

Subject: Appointment of New Director of the Iowa Department for the Blind

Whereas, the Realignment Bill of 2023 transfers the power to appoint the director of the Iowa Department for the Blind from the three-member Commission for the Blind, who are appointed by the governor, to the governor alone; and

Whereas, Emily Wharton has resigned her position as director of the Iowa Department for the Blind as of July 18, 2024; and

Whereas, the Iowa Council of the United Blind has a vested interest in the direction a new director will take in the provision of services to blind consumers with respect to their employment, independence, and ability to lead productive and fulfilling lives; and

Whereas, the new director should be a blind person, who has intimate knowledge of blindness and therefore can understand its problems and how to overcome them; and

Whereas, the new director must have a thorough knowledge of and belief in a positive philosophy of blindness and substantial and successful experience in implementing this philosophy in blind rehabilitation programs; and

Whereas, the new director should be aware of current technologies in use by the blind so as to understand their importance and further the technological education of blind Iowans.

Now therefore be it resolved by the Iowa Council of the United Blind in Convention assembled this day, August 24, 2024, in the city of Ankeny, Iowa, that Governor Kim Reynolds be urged to appoint a new director of the Iowa Department for the Blind whose primary concern is the interests of the blind themselves; and

Be it further resolved that Governor Reynolds carefully consider appointing a new director for the agency who is blind, thus providing a positive role model to the blind and the larger community, exemplifying the mission of the Iowa Department for the Blind, which is to “empower blind Iowans to be gainfully employed and live independently;” and

Be it further resolved that the governor appoint a new director who understands the positive approach to blindness and how to implement it in the Department’s rehabilitation programs and services, since hiring an individual without these traits would run counter to the Department’s mission and vision; and

Be it further resolved that Governor Reynolds hire a new director who demonstrates competency in the various technologies used by the blind and promotes the use of these technologies by the agency and blind Iowans; and

Be it further resolved that the president of ICUB present a copy of this resolution to Governor Kim Reynolds and the three Commissioners by August 31, 2024.