

April 3, 2018

Honorable Gene DiGirolamo
49 East Wing, P.O. Box 202018
Harrisburg, Pa 17120-2018

Dear Representative DiGirolamo and Members of the Human Service Committee:

On behalf of the entire Pennsylvania Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH), an advisory council to the Commonwealth whose members are appointed by the Governor, we write today to express our firm support of HB 2069 of 2018 that creates permanent funding for deafblind Support Service Provider (SSP) services in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Support service providers are trained to assist deafblind individuals specifically by providing environmental information and acting as a guide and communication facilitator. We are proud to share that a newly appointed member of the Council is a representative of the deafblind community and her SSP support enhances her abilities, including enabling her to attend our meetings and participate fully in the proceedings.

We understand that this proposed legislation amends the act of December 12, 1994 (P.L.1023, No.139), known as the Independent Living Services Act; and that in 2014, the Department of Labor and Industry allocated a pilot grant to start a statewide SSP program in Pennsylvania. This program has since allowed many more deafblind Pennsylvanians to access their communities and avoid costly in-home care or nursing home placement.

To ensure this program continues to succeed in supporting individuals who are deafblind, we support this legislative effort to codify the grant program into statute. If passed, this bill creates permanent funding for SSP services in the Commonwealth and will provide a lifeline toward greater independence for many deafblind Pennsylvanians.

It is imperative that deafblind Pennsylvanians continue to have access to these quality of life services that empower them to live more independent lives.

We thank you for your efforts and wholeheartedly support HB2069 of 2018.

Sincerely,

Karen Leslie-Henry

Chairperson

Advisory Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania