

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND
OF IOWA

Resolution 12-03

Regarding the Consolidation of K-12 Educational Services
for the Deaf and Blind in Iowa

WHEREAS, historically, K-12 educational programs for children in Iowa who are blind or visually impaired have been kept separate and distinct from educational programs for the deaf and hard of hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Iowa Board of Regents, an agency which oversees the operation of the Iowa Braille School and the Iowa School for the Deaf, has recently taken actions which seem to indicate its desire to consolidate K-12 educational programs for the blind with K-12 educational programs for the deaf; and

WHEREAS, this is reinforced by the fact that on April 1, 2012, the Iowa Board of Regents significantly expanded the job responsibilities of Patrick Clancy, Director of Iowa's Statewide Vision Services, and appointed him as Superintendent of the Iowa School for the Deaf, the effect of which is that Mr. Clancy is no longer able to devote 100% of his time and effort to the improvement of K-12 educational services for children in Iowa who are blind or significantly visually impaired; and

WHEREAS, a feasibility and planning study committee was established by the Department of Management and began meeting monthly in late June to examine the structure for future effective statewide services for students who are deaf, blind, hard of hearing, visually impaired or deafblind in Iowa; and

WHEREAS, the educational needs for children who are blind or visually impaired are markedly different from those for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; for example, a child who is deaf does not require intensive instruction in the reading and writing of Braille, and a child who is blind does not need to learn sign language; and

WHEREAS, the fact that a single committee has been charged with the task of determining the fate of future effective statewide services for two distinct populations with vastly different needs symbolizes the inaccurate belief that all students with sensory disabilities can be served by one single program or organization; and

WHEREAS, it has been and continues to be a longstanding tenet of the organized blind community that the most effective service delivery system for the blind is one which recognizes the distinct and unique needs of this low incidence population: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa in convention assembled this 30th day of September, 2012 in the city of Altoona, Iowa that this organization express

strong opposition to any and all efforts that would have the effect of combining K-12 educational services for the blind with K-12 educational services for the deaf; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization call upon the Iowa Board of Regents, Governor Terry Branstad, and the Iowa General Assembly to recognize that blind children in Iowa have distinct and unique educational needs that are not now being met and that combining services for the blind with services for the deaf will harm--not help--this population.

Resolution unanimously adopted.