Resolution 2016–01

Regarding Moving Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped out of the Maryland State Department of Education

WHEREAS, one of the major obstacles that blind people face is access to the printed word; and

WHEREAS, the Maryland Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) remains a major source of reading material for blind children, working age citizens, and seniors losing vision; and

WHEREAS, LBPH has been administratively part of the Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for the forty-eight years of its existence; and

WHEREAS, throughout its history LBPH has suffered under this administrative structure because it had no ability to manage its own resources and only gained a specific line item in the DLDS budget in 2014; and

WHEREAS, LBPH has repeatedly been ignored by the larger MSDE bureaucracy, and this lack of attention has repeatedly led to constant staff shortages and reductions in annual funding; and

WHEREAS, these unpardonable actions have been the primary impediment to LBPH’s ability to deliver adequate services to the blind citizens of Maryland; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 the Maryland Advisory Council on Libraries issued recommendations to transition the DLDS to an independent state agency in the executive branch of Maryland state government, and to rename the DLDS as the State Library, and to place it under the purview of the Maryland State Library Commission; and

WHEREAS, according to these recommendations, LBPH will be included in the new State Library; and

WHEREAS, current plans call for the Maryland State Library Commission to consist of twelve members, of which seven are to be appointed by the Governor and five are to be selected from the public at large, but no mention is made of specific inclusion of a blind person on the commission even though LBPH will be a major part of the Commission’s responsibility; and

WHEREAS, both the Governor and General Assembly will have to approve the implementation of these recommendations: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland in Convention assembled this thirtieth day of October, 2016, in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, that this organization urge the Maryland Advisory Council to work with the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland to ensure that the blind are specifically represented on the Maryland State Library Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization strongly urge the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to approve the creation of an independent state library governed by the Maryland State Library Commission in the 2017 session of the Maryland General Assembly.