Resolution 2016-02

Regarding Improving the Handling of Nonvisual Accessibility in the Maryland Procurement System

WHEREAS, Governor Hogan has created the Commission to Modernize State Procurement, and has asked this Commission to complete its work, including recommendations, by December 1, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Governor Hogan has also charged this commission to create policies and procedures that are open, transparent, and equitable for all participants, as well as to establish clear, uniform operational standards; and

WHEREAS, for many years Maryland has had excellent laws requiring the inclusion of nonvisual access within its procurement processes; and

WHEREAS, these laws are frequently ignored and rarely enforced, leading to blind citizens being denied access to the information that is provided to the rest of the public; and

WHEREAS, without proper nonvisual accessibility tools, blind employees face the risk of being rendered less effective in performing their jobs; and

WHEREAS, although accessibility fixes are sometimes offered after the completion of product design, these fixes rarely provide total nonvisual accessibility and often introduce further complications and inefficiencies in job performance; and

WHEREAS, this organization has offered recommendations to the Commission, which include the creation of a Chief Accessibility Officer position to oversee all aspects of accessibility in state government, and the adoption of penalties and consequences for both vendors and state employees who ignore accessibility requirements; and

WHEREAS, since Governor Hogan has embarked on procurement reform, this is the perfect opportunity to end Maryland’s discriminatory practices against blind citizens: 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 demand that both Governor Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly take immediate steps to introduce true accountability into the procurement process for nonvisual access by implementing the recommendations that we have submitted to the Commission to Modernize State Procurement, thereby eliminating the discriminatory practices of Maryland against its blind employees and all other blind citizens.