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7450 Chapman Highway, #319
Knoxville, TN 37920

Dear Senator Gelser:

I write this letter on behalf of the National Association of Blind Merchants, a division of the National Federation of the Blind. We are the largest organization in the country representing the interests of blind entrepreneurs. I write to you in regards to Senate Bill 841 in which changes current law as it relates to vending facilities that are operated by blind entrepreneurs.

I have not seen the final version of the bill so I will not address its finer points. However, our organization supports any effort to increase opportunities for the blind who own their own businesses and to be self-supporting. For many years, we have felt that the Oregon program has failed to meet its full potential. The lack of clarity in the current law has contributed to this in a significant way. We urge you to ensure that this bill provides clarity in a way that will increase and enhance opportunities for the blind.

We also support any efforts to ensure that the Commission for the Blind meets federal requirements to allow for the active participation of the elected committee of blind vendors. It is our experience that states who embrace the concept of active participation and where the agency and vendors work jointly in all major administrative decisions generally have more successful programs.

NABM has provided a great deal of advice and counsel to the Commission and the blind vendors. We look forward to continuing that relationship and helping you in any way we can in building the best business enterprise program possible in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Nicholas P. Gacos
President