



# American Council of the Blind

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April 6, 2017

**RE: Support of HB 3253/SB841**

**To the Honorable Members of the Oregon State Assembly & Senate:**

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) writes in support of the current Oregon legislation to promote greater opportunity for blind entrepreneurs in the state of Oregon, found in HB 3253 and the companion bill SB 841. ACB is the nation's leading consumer grassroots advocacy organization representing Americans who are blind and visually impaired. With 70 affiliates across the country — including our state affiliate, ACB of Oregon, and our national Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) — ACB is a principal voice on identifying pathways to opportunity for Americans who are blind, such as those opportunities spelled out through the Randolph-Sheppard Act, codified under 29 USC Chapter 16.

It is ACB's opinion that HB 3253/SB841 will not only align the state's blind vendors program outlined under ORS 346.510 following recent federal court proceedings on such matters, but will also create better efficiencies within the program, resulting in better outcomes with less burden to Oregon tax payers. The following key legislative actions affirm ACB's rationale for support of this legislation:

- **To guarantee the priority for blind vendors through codifying the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) housed within the Commission for the Blind;**
- **To enhance opportunities for employment of blind entrepreneur's and other persons with disabilities whom they employ through the BEP;**
- **To ensure administrative accountability in the operation of the program through greater transparency and reporting to the state legislature.**

Currently, Americans who are blind and significantly visually impaired face great challenges toward gaining successful and meaningful competitive integrated employment. The American Community Survey reports 58.4% of Oregonians who are blind are not employed. Vending programs such as the BEP have shown great success in creating sustainable careers. These careers not only possess great growth opportunity for Oregonians who are blind, but also stimulate the economy through additional jobs created when vending operations grow.

For this reason, we encourage the Oregon State Assembly to enact HB 3253/SB 841.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Bridges". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Eric Bridges  
Executive Director