

May 6, 2019.

Dear House Rules Committee Members,

My name is James Edwards, and I am the president of an organization of blind and vision impaired citizens in Oregon, a non profit consumer advocacy group, called the American Council of the Blind of Oregon.

We have approximately 160 members statewide, and we are an affiliate of our national organization, the American Council of the Blind.

This letter is written on behalf of our organization in support of written testimony submissions opposing HB 3431, which have been submitted to OLIS, for your consideration.

Without going into the great detail please know that we collectively agree with those submissions, in opposition to HB 3431.

We feel it is important that we express our concerns with respect to the negative impact that HB 3431 will have on blind Oregonians, specifically the Oregon Blind Licensed Vendors.

Many years ago, federal and state legislators carved out a niche of self sustaining employment for people who are blind to take advantage of if they so choose.

This program is called the Randolph Sheppard Act, which provides opportunities for blind people to operate their businesses in alignment with these laws.

This program has provided many blind people the opportunity to make a living wage while also giving them the privilege of being a productive, contributing member of working class, tax paying society.

Therefore, for any legislative initiative proposed by a large governmental entity that would deny a Blind citizen of Oregon the right to those privileges should be categorically denied.

With the recent passage of HB 3253, and all the excitement around its passage, which our organization was involved in, why now are we back so soon arguing our right to the most basic human rights, the right to make a decent living and to live the American dream?

We urge you to ignore the pleadings of Metro, and to consider instead, the impact this proposed legislation through its broad sweeping will have on a Oregon's Blind citizens. Please keep in mind that not only would such proposed legislation if enacted limit opportunities, displace current blind persons, but as well would deny this opportunity to other blind persons yet to come.

Please allow these persons the rights intended for them.

Respectfully,

James Edwards, President

American Council of the Blind of Oregon