

Dear Chairman Holvey and Committee Members:

The National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM), a division of the National Federation of the Blind, urges you to take no action during this session on HB 3431. Initially, this bill was intended to exempt certain Metro properties from the priority afforded to blind vendors to operate vending facilities on properties owned or leased by the State or its political subdivisions. However, the proposed amendment has taken on a life of its own and changes continue to be made that are unrelated to Metro's issue. The blindness community in Oregon is confused by the proposed changes and fears the unintended consequences of a bill hastily put together.

Furthermore, the amendment fixes a problem that does not require an immediate fix if a fix at all. Metro is not in danger of losing significant revenue. The priority to manage and operate vending facilities is at the discretion of the Commission for the Blind. The Commission has the freedom to not exercise the priority for any vending facility sites on the Metro properties in question until such time as the matter can be further reviewed.

NABM suggests that a work group be established to address the unique situation at Metro. This would afford an opportunity for Metro, the Commission for the Blind, and the blind entrepreneurs to craft a well thought out amendment that could be introduced next session or perhaps agree to a memorandum of understanding that would eliminate the necessity for legislation at all. Blind Oregonians deserve a deliberate process that ensures the bill will not adversely impact blind entrepreneurs in ways that are not intended.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nicky Gacos, President
National Association of Blind Merchants.