

To: Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

From: Laura White, Kansas

Date: July 18, 2015

Re: National DeafBlind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)

To Whom it May Concern:

I am a wife of a U.S. Army reserve soldier, mother of two college students, and manager of our home. I am here most of the time alone, due to husband's travels with work and military and kids away at college. We will have our third deployment coming in 2016 where he will be gone for a year. My family depends on me to maintain the home and the finances.

I was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) with Usher Syndrome. With this disease my vision and hearing will deteriorate as time goes by and my needs will change in what equipment I will need to stay independent.

The NDBEDP program helped me be able to obtain some equipment that I could not afford on my own. I depend on different equipment for daily living, for example, a Closed Circuit TV (CCTV), which helps me read regular print documents and literatures. Whereas people with "normal" vision can just pick up a piece a paper or literature and just start reading. Without the CCTV I am not able to pay my bills, maintain my financial bookkeeping, read birthday cards, letters from businesses and family, my children's progress reports, or see family photos. I use the CCTV EVERYDAY and would be lost without it. In order to cover my basic living

expenses I would not be able to afford the cost of all the equipment I use just to be independent.

Through the NDBEDP program I received the CCTV and a Desktop computer with ZoomText software. I still have not fulfilled my need for certain equipment that is necessary when I am away from home. It would be very hard for me to go away for a week or month to stay somewhere or care for a family member because I would not be able to maintain my bills or communicate with family without my home based equipment. I am still not set up for a way to communicate in an emergency such as a large key and amplified home phone or updated iphone device to use away from home. I would like an updated iphone, large key phone, and a laptop with ZoomText software. I have been told by the ICC representative for my state that I need to go through the TAP program and can only choose one method of a phone plan, either a home phone or get assistance on an updated iphone, close to \$300. It costs \$650 to update an iphone without a contract. I have asked about a laptop for when I go to my mother's or other family member's home. Laptops are not provided by ICC. However, if family is in KS ICC can set up equipment in their home. My family is in MO and FL

I would like to propose in the rule-making process that an evaluation period be set up for DeafBlind people to go to the ICC site and be able to view or test equipment so as to match their needs and learn more about the process of getting needed equipment. This process should be in the rules as it would generate a big positive sign of what equipment to ask for.

Many of the pieces of equipment I need are way over \$2,000 – \$3,000. Because of the pieces of equipment I need for independent living, there is a huge expense that would make it hard for me to purchase necessary equipment on my own without the support of the ICanConnect team in my state.

Something I am concerned about is how to replace equipment when it needs to be replaced. I am talking about my current hearing aids. I wear two behind the ear hearing aids with a Bluetooth necklace to use for iPhone, TV, and computer. Each of these hearing aids cost \$3,000, meaning two would come to around \$6,000 to replace. A replacement hearing aid would be necessary if one gets damaged or lost. Right now my hearing aids are seven years old and may need replacing at any time. I do not know how to replace the hearing aids because of the expense.

With this rule-making proposal of the FCC concerning the NDBEDP, I would like to offer that a rule be proposed to allow ICanConnect staff to help me in the event I need to replace one or both hearing aids. There may be a way for ICanConnect staff to help me perhaps by offering consultation or guidance on what to do in this scenario. Since the national VR programs do not help outside employment opportunities I believe this type of rule is necessary.