

Good afternoon Chair and Vice Chair of Education.

My name is Ann C. Black and I have lived in Rockville for 28 years.

I am asking my Communication Facilitator (CF) to read my testimony.

I would like to take the opportunity to discuss HB 98 and SB 185 bill which is very important for the DeafBlind Community.

I am DeafBlind from Ushers Syndrome which is an ongoing visual and hearing loss. Communication and mobility are the biggest barriers that effect my life. Recently I lost my last stage of vision and now I can't see anything, people, American Sign Language, anything in my environment. While going through adjustments, I felt isolated without a CN Co Navigator which is badly needed for daily life.

DeafBlind people depend on various modes of communication, depending on their levels of vision loss and hearing loss. No two DeafBlind people are alike. CNs require special training to work with DeafBlind people.

As you can see, CN is a very important service for DeafBlind individuals in order to be active in the community and enhance our lives. CNs are trained to give DeafBlind people environmental information to help us function confidently and comfortably in the community, so we can stay actively involved.

Thank you for allowing me to testify. Your consideration of us who are DeafBlind is greatly appreciated, and we hope you will pass this special bill.