

Subject: Support for HB456
From: Shaun Johnson
To: House Health and Government Operations Committee
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Please support HB456. Give me and other blind people the opportunity to manage our health on our own terms.

I was diagnosed with diabetes when I was 17. I had the complications of diabetes which led to lots of surgery to save my vision. In October 2018, I was in the hospital for an ulcer on my foot. When I was in the recovery room for the ulcer surgery, I had a heart attack. I had a quadruple bypass for my heart, and when I woke up from that surgery, I was totally blind. I went to a nursing home in November, but since I was 35 years old, I didn't intend to stay there. I got out of the nursing home on April 4, 2019. I didn't want to have people taking care of me; I knew I had to learn how to be blind. I found the National Federation of the Blind, and they told me that I could be independent.

When I came out of the nursing home, I had to manage 13 medications. I was totally dependent on my mother to sort them. In July, I attended Blind Industries and Services of Maryland, an adjustment-to-blindness program. One of the things I learned was that there were devices that could help me identify the pills.

I spent July 2019 to the present educating pharmacists on the existence and procurement of accessible labels. Some of the pharmacies couldn't understand what I was telling them and refused to work with me. Today I take about 12 medications. I receive most of them through mail order services because I was told that mail was the only way to get accessible labels. I chose to use the Script Talk app on my phone to read the labels. I can identify what medication I have, the dosage, how many refills I have left, and, when needed, side effects. This system works well for me, but I wish I could get the labels from a local pharmacy. It would be more convenient when I'm running out to get some things locally.

I hope to get a kidney transplant soon. Transplant medications must be taken very precisely as directed by the doctor; failure to do so could result in loss of life. Accessible information is vital for me. Please vote in favor of HB 456. Give me the chance to maintain a quality of life and the ability to pursue future aspirations.