

Subject: Support with an Amendment for HB1163 State Department of Education – Division of Rehabilitation Services – Funding

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To: House Appropriations Committee

Amendment: Page two after line nine, add the following: The state funds must cover both the match for the original grants as well as the re-allotment grant.

This amendment is necessary because there is an original requirement for a state match plus a re-allotment amount that comes later in the year, July 15-August 15. The federal formula that determines how much money the state gets, and the states required match is complex. It is based on the population and per capita income. In addition, the state may receive extra money that other states did not use during the re-allotment period. Therefore, the governor and the State Department of Education must make sure that Maryland has enough money to match all the grants from the federal government.

Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland wholeheartedly support the amended HB1163/SB859 because the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is responsible for helping persons with disabilities including the blind with employment services. This bill outlines the procedures necessary to acquire federal money and to disperse it. The governor must put state money in the budget to get the federal funds. This bill should be amended to specifically require that the state should not be giving federal money back because it did not spend the appropriate state funding. The Department of Education which houses DORS should take specific action to spend the federal and state money on DORS clients. It is unbelievable that the state would give back federal funds.

Blind people of working age require many services such as adjustment to blindness training, acquisition of specialized equipment such as assistive technology, the ability to attend college or a work-related training program, etc. The delivery of these services takes time and money. Common sense dictates that the State of Maryland should do everything possible to take advantage of all the federal money.

Every person with a disability would prefer to work and become a taxpayer. This bill will make the dream of work a reality. Persons with disabilities will become taxpayers so the money for training and other services is well spent. Please vote in favor of HB1163/SB859.