



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **US Navy Settles Discrimination Claim by Blind Employee** *Educational Assistant to Receive \$100,000*

**Washington, DC (February 28, 2019):** Mary Carla Flood had worked for the United States Department of the Navy as an Educational Technician for only a day and a half when she was summarily fired. She had done nothing wrong, but human resources officials felt constrained by the results of her physical. That physical had revealed that she was legally blind, a fact that was obvious to the personnel who hired her on the spot at her job interview (Ms. Flood sometimes uses a white cane to navigate, and reads with reading glasses or uses large print). But the physician, based on the Navy's medical certification form requiring all Educational Technicians to have "normal vision in both eyes," as well as to have both hands and both legs, recommended Ms. Flood be terminated.

The Navy has now settled the discrimination suit that Ms. Flood brought after her firing. A significant factor in the settlement negotiations was the expert report of Carla McQuillan, a blind Montessori teacher and owner of Montessori schools. "I have been in this field since 1980 and have observed countless blind and visually impaired individuals work in childcare and early education settings, not to mention my own direct experience. There is absolutely no evidence that blind and visually impaired childcare workers and early education specialists are any less competent or safe than those who are not blind or visually impaired," said McQuillan.

Ms. Flood will receive \$100,000, and the Navy has also agreed to enter into discussions with the National Federation of the Blind, which assisted Ms. Flood with her case, to develop nondiscriminatory employment practices with respect to blind people.

"By far the greatest barriers to the employment of blind people are low expectations and misconceptions about our abilities," said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. "In spite of its legal obligation to implement affirmative action to hire employees with disabilities, the United States Navy is clearly trying to avoid hiring qualified individuals with disabilities. The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines blind people, and we seek to convey this truth to all employers. We look forward to working with the Navy to ensure that its current and future blind employees do not experience discriminatory treatment."

"When I was hired by the Navy on the spot, I was thrilled and excited to have a full-time job working with children. But when the Navy then fired me just as quickly because they just assumed blind and visually impaired people could not work with children, it was absolutely devastating. I am relieved that this case has settled and my rights have been vindicated," said Mary Carla Flood.

Flood has been represented by Scott LaBarre of LaBarre Law Offices P.C. and Eve Hill of Brown Goldstein and Levy LLP.

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**About the National Federation of the Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), headquartered in Baltimore, is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind Americans. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The NFB defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality. Learn more about our many programs and initiatives at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org).

**CONTACT:**

Chris Danielsen  
Director of Public Relations  
National Federation of the Blind  
(410) 659-9314, extension 2330  
(410) 262-1281 (Cell)  
[cdanielsen@nfb.org](mailto:cdanielsen@nfb.org)