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National Federation of the Blind Applauds Landmark Agreement with Seattle Public Schools

Comprehensive Consent Decree Will Ensure Accessibility of School Programs and Services

Seattle, Washington (September 24, 2015): Noel Nightingale, the blind mother of a Seattle Public Schools (SPS) student, and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the nation's leading advocate for equal access and equal education for the blind, today applauded a vote yesterday evening by the Board of Directors of SPS to execute a landmark agreement that will ensure the accessibility of all of SPS's programs, services, and activities to blind students, faculty, and parents. The agreement, in the form of a consent decree resolving litigation, will see the school system take a series of historic steps to ensure, in particular, that all of its electronic and information technology will be fully and equally accessible to students, faculty, and parents who are blind. The consent decree must be approved by the Federal District Court for the Western District of Washington, where the case was brought. The steps that SPS will take under the decree include:

- Making its websites accessible to the blind, including parents like Ms. Nightingale, through existing technology;
- Hiring or appointing a system-wide accessibility coordinator, answerable to a cabinet-level official designated by the SPS superintendent;
- Conducting an accessibility audit of SPS's electronic and information technology, as well as other programs, services, and activities, and developing a plan to remediate the accessibility issues revealed by the audit;
- Creating and maintaining an Accessible Education Resources Portal to help faculty and staff communicate effectively with people with disabilities and ensure accessibility of educational content, and to provide information about disability policies and services to students, faculty, and parents with disabilities;
- Inserting language into the system's procurement requests and contracts requiring vendors to provide specific information about the compliance of their products and services with

federal laws (such as the Americans With Disabilities Act) and accessibility guidelines, and requiring vendors to indemnify the school system for discrimination complaints resulting from inaccessibility of their products; and

- Training district officers, school administrators, faculty, and other key personnel on applicable laws, electronic and information technology accessibility guidelines, and the creation of accessible content.

Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, said: “This landmark agreement with the Seattle Public Schools should serve as a model for the nation and should put school districts on notice that we can no longer wait to have equal education for blind students and to have access to information, use of school services, and full participation in school activities by blind faculty, personnel, and parents. The National Federation of the Blind applauds the leadership of the Seattle Public Schools in adopting this agreement, and as a blind father and parent of two blind children I personally look forward to working with the district to implement this historic and comprehensive plan of action.”

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About the National Federation of the Blind

The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

National Federation of the Blind