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House of Representatives

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the General Assembly

FROM: Representative Gary Williams

DATE: September 19, 2012

SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship – Louis Braille Commission for the Blind

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that will establish the Louis Braille Commission for the Blind.

At the young age of 3, Louis Braille suffered from an accident in his father's workshop which led to his blindness. Despite the difficulty Louis faced in school, he had a passion to learn. While attending the Royal Institution for the Blind Youth in Paris, Louis met a former soldier who introduced him to a soldiers' night writing code which consisted of 12 raised dots. At 15 years old, Louis consolidated the method into 6 dots, and later added symbols for math and music. Thanks to Louis Braille, practically every country in the world uses his system, which helps the blind communicate independently.

In our Commonwealth, we have encouraged visually impaired people to achieve Louis Braille's mission for the blind - independence. Additionally, numerous organizations across the Commonwealth assist our visually impaired citizens develop life skills and provide necessary transportation and opportunities.

As the nature and standard practices of state government change over time, I believe it is imperative that we, as the Legislature, communicate with our entire constituency, including the visually impaired; therefore, I will be introducing legislation to create the Louis Braille Commission for the Blind.

My legislation will require the formation of an 8 member commission comprised of individuals from the Civil Service Commission, the Department of General Services, the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Health, the Department of Public Welfare, the Department of Aging, and the Pennsylvania Association for the Blind. This commission will study and determine the need for the publication of state documents and forms in braille. Furthermore, this commission will make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor for the purpose of ensuring that the Legislature is properly educating and informing our blind and partially sighted constituency. The commission will meet at least once every quarter of the year to complete its evaluation and provide recommendations.

If you would like to join me in cosponsoring this legislation, please contact Deb Bricker in my Harrisburg office at (717) 772-2004 or via email at dbricker@pahouse.net.