

**HB 2069-2018, Printer's No. 3015**  
**Video Testimony**

**Link to video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2vNwDmzeP8>

**The video**

- All persons on video are using American Sign Language
- It is captioned
- A script accompanies the video

**Persons providing testimony**

All person are from the Pittsburgh area

- Donna Huff
- Janie McDermott
- Jimmy Landiorio
- Richard Farrier
- Lorraine Musial
- Linda Finnigan
- Terri Ryoan
- Lori Farrier
- Renee Fisher
- Jez Hoffstein
- MJ Shahan
- Mike Davis
- Albert Saltiel

Revised March 16

Facebook

Transcription in English for braille

Donna Huff

Hello. My name is Donna Huff and I'm Deafblind. I'm also the Deafblind coordinator. SSPs are very important to me because I need to get out of the house. It's not good for us to experience isolation. We need to get out and about in the community, enjoy ourselves, go grocery shopping, and so on. I don't like depending on my family. I want to be independent. I need your help in supporting SSPs. Thank you.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller

Janie McDermott

Since I have Usher Syndrome, I am now Deafblind. Being alone in my house can be lonely for me. It's not good for one's health. If a person is at home too much, they can develop health problems such as mental illness, depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders. I need to go outside and interact with others with the assistance of an SSP. For example, Helen Keller had an SSP to help her, Johanna “Anne” Sullivan. In the past, Deafblind individuals had companions, but now it has come to a halt. SSP services should continue. Without an SSP, many Deafblind individuals feel lost in their surroundings. Hearing people who are non-signers communicate with Deafblind people through print-on-palm, but that method is challenging. For example, in a store, hearing people who are non-signers can't communicate with Deafblind shoppers about clothing colors, etc. SSPs provide me with visual information so I can select the right kinds of items, such as brands, spices, clothing colors and fabrics, etc. on my shopping list. SSPs have signing skills, and that is how Deafblind individuals communicate. If we do not have an SSP, Deafblind individuals cannot tell which are the preferred products, etc. therefore we still need SSPs. Hearing people who are non-signers can't communicate with Deafblind shoppers about clothing colors, etc. Deafblind individuals feel more comfortable while communicating with SSPs who know how to use American Sign Language instead of fingerspelling, print-on-palm, and writing with small fonts. When I travel with an SSP, he or she provides me with all kinds of visual and environmental information. For example, what mountains look like, how beautiful they are, what public transportation looks like, names of restaurants, etc. I can neither see nor hear anything. Therefore, I must have SSPs. Thank you.

Research shows that people who are Deafblind who do not have social contact are at high risk for depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.

Jimmy Iandiorio

I'm Jimmy Iandiorio. SSPs are very important because I need to get out and about, and I can't see. People who can see have no problem traveling, but it's a challenge for me because I can't see. Just like anyone else, I want to attend the theater, go shopping, go to the doctor's office, take public transportation, etc. One state, Louisiana, provides 60 hours per month--far more SSP hours than here in Pennsylvania. Other states such as Florida and Arizona provide about 50 hours. Most other states provide at least 25 hours. However, Pennsylvania provides less than 15 hours! I am asking you and our government officials to continue support for SSP services. Why is Pennsylvania lagging behind other states? Pennsylvania needs to improve for the sake of the Deafblind community and their ability to enjoy life, instead of constantly staying home. Being alone in my house can be lonely for me. One of my Deafblind friends lives in Virginia. For example, her parents are passed, and she lives alone. Her mental health is deteriorating, and she has trouble remembering her friends' names because she has no opportunities to get out and socialize. Her life is like a prison. That's why SSP services are so crucial; they prevent depression. Just like anyone else, Deafblind individuals need to socialize and be a part of society.

Eliminate what doesn't help you evolve.

Richard Farrier

Hello. Staying at home isn't fair. We need SSPs to do things like grocery shopping, visiting family, attending meetings, and recreational activities. I am Deafblind, so I can't see. Staying home day in and day out is not fair and not right. Please support SSP services. Thanks.

Lorraine Musial

We need more SSPs. Please come! I have a hard time getting around by myself. Thank you very much.

Linda Finnigan

I need SSP services because I am lonely. Please support SSPs. Thank you.

Terri Ryan

We need more SSPs, instead of SSP services coming to a stop. Every year, we need more and more SSPs. Instead of once a month, we need SSP access every week for shopping, swimming, groceries, socializing, Christmas gatherings, Valentine's Day outings, Easter celebrations, and traveling. Please support SSPs!

Lori Farrier

Please support SSPs because I do not want to stay at home day after day. I want to go out and enjoy myself.

Support Service Providers explain how they provide visual and environmental information to their consumers. Many Deafblind individuals benefit greatly from having regular access to these SSP services.

Renee Fisher

Hi, I'm an SSP and I'm Deaf. When Pennsylvania set up an SSP program, I was a volunteer for four years. Later, I became a professional SSP. I see how happy Deafblind people are when they have an SSP. Instead of depression, they feel happy, and it increases their self-esteem. When SSP hours were reduced to five hours a month, I saw many Deafblind people change and become depressed and upset. Imagine: just five hours in one month! Five hours per month is just impossible. You cannot even imagine. Deafblind individuals need more SSP hours to increase their independence, and their self-esteem. Without SSPs, Deafblind are isolated or have to depend on family and friends for so much. That's just not good. Other states have been successful in increasing SSP hours of service, but not here. There will always be a continued need for SSP services for Deafblind people. Thank you.

Jez Hoffstein

Hello! I'm an SSP, and I'm Deaf. I feel really bad for the Deafblind. Think about it: a Deafblind person stays at home, and the worst part is, they can't watch TV, use visual things like personal devices, and they can't look out the window at what's happening. Imagine you yourself are Deafblind, and you go shopping. How do you know what items are on the shelves? Just five hours per month with an SSP? How is that possible? It's insane. Find a way to support SSPs. Thank you.

Maryjean (Mj) Shahen

Hello. I'm Deaf, and I'm an SSP. Take a moment to imagine you were a dog. You're waiting patiently at the fence, waiting patiently for your owner to return home. When your owner arrives home, the dog feels excited. It's the same concept with Deafblind individuals if they are constantly at home, waiting, and finally the SSP arrives after one or two weeks because they only receive funding for five hours per month with each Deafblind person. When the SSP arrives, the Deafblind person can finally leave the house, breathe fresh air, and experience freedom. Without an SSP, a Deafblind person is like a hostage in their own home. Without outside contact, a person begins to develop mental health problems like depression and perseverance. It isn't normal or healthy for a person to be cooped up inside the house. It's important to recruit, educate, and train professional SSPs. In turn, the SSPs will support Deafblind individuals in living more independent lives. Remember, Deafblind citizens pay taxes. SSPs pay taxes as well. Therefore, Pennsylvanians should support us. Thank you.

“We are not second-class citizens.” Mj Shahen

Mike Davis

I'm an SSP. I see Deafblind just staying at home all the time while hearing and Deaf people go out anytime they want. Deafblind can't drive a car, while hearing and Deaf people can. Deafblind have to make appointments with an SSP anytime they want to run an errand. Hearing and Deaf people are privileged because they can go anytime they wish. We need to support Deafblind SSPs in order to be fair.

Albert Saltiel

Society may perceive Deafblind individuals as doing just fine, but the reality is, they are not fine. They can't read the newspaper or other devices. Grocery stores and restaurants don't generally provide braille to their customers. If SSPs don't get paid, they can't provide services to the Deafblind consumers. When SSP hours are reduced, Deafblind people feel upset and frustrated. I suggest SSP services provide more hours per month. Remember: Deafblind citizens pay taxes. In return, government officials must provide some way of supporting these individuals. Deafblind gathering holds fundraisers, but it's just not enough. Fundraising at Deaf events makes people feel good, but it's really not enough. If the support isn't in place, there is no effect. Deafblind feel deflated afterwards. Please understand! Thanks.

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Deafblind community members and their Support Service Providers share their experiences and their reasons for supporting Pennsylvania House Bill 2069, which will permanently fund much-needed SSP hours for Deafblind individuals. Please call your local legislators now and ask them to support for House Bill 2069. Find your legislators' contact information at <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

**HB 2069-2018, Printer's No. 3015**  
**Written Testimony**

This document contains testimony by 7 persons:

- Donna Huff
- Linda Finnigan
- Allison Cherry
- Jimmy Landiorio
- Janie McDermott
- Jacqueline Gross-McDowell, M.A.
- Zenola Tyson

Hello my name is Donna Huff. I am deafblind and need an SSP with me so I am not dependent on my family or friends to help me. 5 hours a month is not enough to do anything. I am deafblind so it does take me couple hours to go food shopping so I can pick what I want or go out and enjoy life and not be isolated in my home with no fun. Isolation is not good for anyone it can make them crazy and we need fun times like anyone else. It is easy for others who are not deafblind to go out and enjoy themselves without having to worry about hearing or seeing things. Myself as being deafblind is not easy to go out, I need an SSP to be my ears and my eyes to explain to me clear what is going on around me or even to be my guide so I can go out and know I am safe. Please don't limit us Deafblind! We NEED SSP, WE NEED SSP AND 5 HOURS A MONTH IS NOT ENOUGH. GIVE US MORE HOURS, NO MORE ISOLATION. LET US BE FREE WITH AN SSP!!

Please Support HB 2069

Sincerely,  
Donna Huff  
Dhuff864@gmail.com

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This Linda Finnigan.I would like say something that I want get more hours of ssp. I need SSP as needed to go to blind association events, social with friends and family, out to eat, shopping, walk at park, swim at community pool and YMCA, enjoy with friends and family picnic and party, games, see sport events. I am usually lonely at home. Thank you.

Try to get more SSP involved to help deafblind (db) group to keep deafblind more informed. Thank you.

Linda Finnigan  
Lindaloo685@gmail.com

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Honorable Gene DiGirolamo  
49 East Wing  
P.O. Box 202018  
Harrisburg, Pa 17120-2018

Dear Representative DiGirolamo and Members of the Human Service Committee:

I am a PA Support Service Provider in the Pittsburgh area. It is paramount that this program be saved. It empowers deaf-blind people to be independent and allows them the freedom to make their own choices. Many deaf-blind people in Pennsylvania have come to rely on this program for everyday tasks that many take for granted. Please support HB 2069.

Thank you

Allison L. Cherry 🍒

Allison.cherry29@gmail.com

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Jimmy Landiorio and Janie McDermott (we) both are deaf-blind. SSP Service Program actually is important to the deaf-blind people in Pa. Deaf-Blind people, including Jimmy and Janie, really need SSPs to guide/help us to everywhere. We are Deaf-Blind and communicate in American Sign Language. We need SSP to help with deaf-blind client needs.

Don't cut our deaf-blind SSP hours. It isn't enough hours for us to go out to everywhere like you go out often yourself. We couldn't go out without SSPs. We actually want more hours than 5 hours—5 hours isn't enough.

Most states have more than 25 hours a month on SSP Services—between 25 and 60 hours a month. Deaf-Blind clients are happy of that and ever go out to everywhere.

It's important to keep Pa. SSP Service running strong and improve. Pa. deaf-blind clients actually want more hours is 30 or 35 hours a month that would be great and much better. Fix the budget being raised, improve it and the SSP services stay alive and grow big & strong.

Jimmy Landiorio [wonderwomantarzan@gmail.com](mailto:wonderwomantarzan@gmail.com)

Janie McDermott [wonderwoman51@gmail.com](mailto:wonderwoman51@gmail.com)

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**Honorable Gene DiGirolamo  
49 East Wing  
P.O. Box 202018  
Harrisburg, Pa 17120-2018**

**Dear Representative DiGirolamo and Members of the Human Service  
Committee:**

Hello. I am an instructor of English as a Second Language for students who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing at Community College of Allegheny County. I am writing to you in support of permanent funding for Support Service Providers for citizens who are Deafblind in Pennsylvania. Our Deafblind community needs regular SSP access to live and travel independently. Please vote in favor of PA House Bill 2069.

Sincerely,  
Jacqueline Gross-McDowell, M.A.  
Jackie.m.mcdowell@gmail.com

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My name is Zenola Tyson, I live in Camp Hill. I am deaf and blind and appreciate very much use SSPs. SSPs help me by going to doctors' appointments, food shopping, find clothes, social events and many more. I even need Physical Therapy and SSP come along and help me. Imagine you and me switch places. You drive and now you can't. Food store is huge. You see many different foods and I can't. Someone must explain each food to me. I did not realize how many different cereals and salad dressings there are. There are many challenge for Deaf blind and life is not easy. Please, please continue support Deaf-Blind Living Well Services SSP program. We need SSP to help with life to be normal, help our mind calm, and help life better. Thank you.

Zenola Tyson  
Zeadty56@gmail.com

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