

709 Cherrington Drive

Harrisburg, Pa. 17110

April 2, 2018

Dear Representative DiGirolamo and Members of the Human Service Committee:

I am writing to encourage passage of HB 2069 2018. I have been blind for many years but have recently experienced significant hearing loss in the past two years. I am fortunate that I received two hearing aids last September and applied for SSP services through the Center for Independent Living Living Well program. When I first began receiving these services I was able to have an SSP for 15 hours a month. I was greatly disappointed that the program's funding was reduced which consequently reduced the number of hours available to me from 15 to 5 hours per month. Primarily I use my SSP to assist me in reading mail and paying bills. I would like to help you comprehend the vital need for SSP services, and how beneficial having a reader is to me in maintaining my independence. In contrast, I would like to stress how difficult it is only to have 5 hours a month for SSP services. Since this individual is reading mail related to banking, fiscal matters, medical information and results, I can not advertise in a public manner the need for a reader. Even if I do not mind paying for such a reader, it would not be advisable for me or anyone else to secure a reader in this kind of a public way. Likewise, there is no governmental body or agency that provides either free or paid reader services for either the blind or deaf-blind. There is No Agency Which screens volunteers to provide this kind of service. The bottom line is that if SSP services do not exist, I do not know how I am going to get my mail read and bills paid. It takes at least 3 hours a week or 12 hours a month minimum to go through my mail reading it out loud. When I only had a reader 5 hours a week, I kept having to post pone reading some letters to the following week or even later. I lost several opportunities because I was not able to respond back in the proper amount of time. My request is that you permit this program to continue providing at least 15 hours of service per month per consumer.

Thank you very much for giving serious consideration to the request and needs of this population. Again, I restate that these services are not luxury, but assist in essential needs.

Please contact Sharon Behun at the Center for Independent Living at 717-731-1900 v/tty or at [sbehun@cilcp.org](mailto:sbehun@cilcp.org) if you have any questions regarding the need for the passage of this bill. You may call me at 717.545.3063. I plan to attend the hearing scheduled for April 11.

Regards,

Deborah Robinson, M.S. VRT