

Senator Michael Fagg
Senate Utilities Committee

Written Testimony
SB 284 (In Support)

Hearing dated March 14, 2024 at 1:30 PM

To the Honorable Senator Fagg and the Senate Utilities Committee,

I'm writing today in support of SB 284, which would provide access to online news, job posting, magazines, weather, and other critical information for blind or visually-impaired Kansans. I support the bill as an inexpensive and risk-neutral tool for providing necessary services to Kansans.

The bill's fiscal note estimated a modest cost of \$99,000 per year. The National Federation of the Blind estimates there to be about 68,000 blind people in Kansas, to say nothing of the visually-impaired or others who would use these services. A conservative estimate is that the bill costs *at maximum* \$1.45 per person. This cost is negligible and among the least expensive services the state could facilitate.

This negligible cost is also risk-neutral for the state. This cost won't be paid from the state's general fund. The cost will be paid from the Universal Service Fund, which was established explicitly to provide quality telecommunications services to Kansans. The Fund's revenues come from sales tax on telecommunications services within Kansas. Therefore, there is no risk to the state general fund and no competition to other worthy services.

Finally, a more personal note: a talented colleague of mine is a current user of NFB Newsline. He uses the service to access online news and stay apprised of current affairs. Many news websites are not designed with assistive technologies in mind. Kansas is home to many industrious people. It would be a shame to lose some portion of that workforce, merely because we did not provide the blind or visually-impaired community access to information - when it is both inexpensive and safe to do so.

Signed,

Daniel McCarville
Registered Voter in Lawrence, KS