



Live the life you want.

March 17, 2026

The Honorable Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Governor of Arkansas
Arkansas State Capitol Building
500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Governor Huckabee Sanders:

The National Federation of the Blind is built on a simple but powerful truth: blindness does not define our future—what limits us are the barriers society chooses to maintain. Today, thousands of blind Arkansans are confronting one of those barriers, and I write to you to ensure that our state moves swiftly and constructively to remove it.

My name is Nena Chadwick, and I serve as President of the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas. Our organization is made up of blind people, parents of blind children, and allies who believe that blind Arkansans can live the lives we want. At this moment, the very system designed to support blind individuals in achieving employment and independence has come to a standstill.

Since late January, the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has been furloughed. No vocational rehabilitation services. No training. No counseling. No progress toward employment.

This administrative disruption is a wholesale denial of opportunity to blind Arkansans who rely on these services to build skills, pursue careers, and participate fully in the economic life of our state workforce.

We have learned through our board members, national colleagues, and agency partners that this shutdown stemmed from a lack of available carryover funds and restrictions on the use of state dollars prior to federal releases. These factors created pressure, but this does not absolve the agency of its responsibility. The

federal VR program includes established safeguards for precisely this situation. Chief among these is the Order of Selection, which requires a structured, legally guided method for ensuring continuity of services even during funding constraints.

Unfortunately, DSB did not implement this required process. Instead, the agency furloughed all personnel, leaving blind Arkansans with no access to the VR services they are guaranteed under the Rehabilitation Act. This is a profound failure of leadership and a troubling deviation from federal expectations regarding the administration of blind services.

Compounding this crisis, we are aware that:

- The agency's Executive Director was recently pressured to resign.
- Sixteen employees have received reduction-in-force notices, with more anticipated.
- Division of services for the blind receives 12 percent of the general VR agencies' budget—the lowest percentage for a blindness vocational rehabilitation agency in the United States, tied only with Vermont—which is especially disappointing when the general agency has returned \$4,167,199 in matching federal funds, and now services are shut down and blind Arkansans are not receiving services that lead towards employment.
- The DSB Board is operating without full gubernatorial appointments, including the required proportion of blind members needed to meet both the spirit and letter of its statute.

Blind people do not ask for special treatment; we ask for equal access to the tools and training that allow us to contribute to our families, our communities, and our economy. When the systems we depend on collapse, the cost is not abstract. It is borne by every blind Arkansan who is trying to enter the workforce, complete training, support a family, or pull themselves out of poverty. These are not services of convenience—they are mechanisms of economic participation and personal dignity.

The National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas stands ready to work collaboratively with your office to bring the Division back into alignment with federal law, sound fiscal management, and the expectations of the blind community. To move forward constructively, we respectfully request the following:

1. Immediate restoration of operations at DSB so blind Arkansans can resume receiving the services they are entitled to under federal law.

2. A review of the decisions leading to the furlough, with guidance to ensure that federally required processes—especially the Order of Selection—are applied appropriately in the future.
3. Increase the 12 percent shared revenue from the general rehabilitation agency to 14 percent to bring this critical funding more in line with other states.
4. Timely appointment of qualified and representative board members, including a majority of blind Arkansans, to restore the Board's capacity to provide oversight.
5. Clarity regarding the proposed merger of DSB into the general VR agency, including transparent planning, statutory review, and meaningful engagement with the blind community.
6. A meeting with your office, DSB leadership, and representatives of the National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas to establish a path that strengthens—not diminishes—services for blind people in our state.

Blind Arkansans are problem solvers. We know how to innovate, adapt, and lead. We do not fear reform when it protects opportunity and strengthens services. What we cannot accept is a system that leaves our community without support and without answers. The Federation believes deeply in Arkansas and in the potential of our blind citizens. Together, we can restore stability, uphold the law, and ensure that blind Arkansans have what they need to live the lives they want.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to solving this urgent matter. I look forward to working with you to build a stronger, more reliable system of blind services for our state.

Sincerely,



Nena Chadwick
President
National Federation of the Blind of Arkansas