



## **Increased State Funding for Independent Living Blind Rehabilitation Services**

### **The Request**

The National Federation of the Blind of Arizona respectfully requests an additional \$1,000,000 appropriation to the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Older Blind Independent Living program.

### **Why This Matters Now**

Arizona is experiencing rapid growth in its aging population. Approximately 178,000 blind and low vision individuals live in Arizona, and more than 40%—approximately 72,000 people—are over the age of 65. This population is expected to double by 2030.

As more Arizonans experience age-related vision loss, demand for independent living services continues to increase, placing immediate pressure on an already underfunded system.

### **Longstanding Underfunding**

In 2009, the Department of Economic Security Independent Living Program for the Blind experienced a \$500,000 budget reduction. In the more than fourteen years since that reduction, the program has received no meaningful funding increases, despite population growth and rising service demands.

During this same period, other comparable programs have received funding adjustments to respond to changing needs.

### **Unduplicated, Cost-Effective Services**

Independent living services for blind and deaf-blind individuals are unduplicated rehabilitation services. They are not provided through the medical system and are not covered by health insurance.

Without timely access to these services, blind seniors are more likely to require costly alternatives such as assisted living facilities, nursing homes, or in-home care services funded through other state and federal programs.



### **Impact on Arizona Seniors and Families**

Average waiting lists for independent living services exceed 200 blind seniors, with wait times often lasting a year or longer. These delays force many seniors to leave their homes prematurely, reducing independence and increasing public costs.

With proper training and rehabilitation tools, blind seniors are able to remain safely in their homes, maintain independence, and continue to live productive lives in their communities.

### **The Bottom Line**

A targeted investment in independent living blind rehabilitation services supports personal independence, reduces long-term public expenditures, and reflects Arizona's commitment to responsible, effective use of public funds.

Please contact our legislative director, Jordan Moon, at 951-316-5363 or by email at [jmoon@saavi.us](mailto:jmoon@saavi.us) should you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

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