
Dear Representative _____,

My name is _____ and live in _____. As a constituent, I am writing to express my deep concern about HR 4749 Helen Keller National Center Reauthorization Act of 2023¹ that provides federal funding for Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). HKNC is a division of Helen Keller Services (HKS). HKS has failed to uphold its commitments to the DeafBlind community.

On July 22, 2024, HKS appointed a hearing-sighted person as HKNC Executive Director, once again passing over qualified DeafBlind candidates. In doing so, HKS broke a 10-year-old promise to elevate a DeafBlind person to the position for the first time.

In response, members of the DeafBlind community came together and signed a petition that called for DeafBlind Leadership NOW.

The petition's demands are:

1. The appointment of a DeafBlind person as HKNC Executive Director
2. HKNC is separated from HKS, and HKNC becomes its own autonomous organization.
3. HKNC's newly created Board of Trustees is made up of 70 percent or more DeafBlind members.
4. HKS and its subsidiary organizations do not retaliate against anyone affiliated with HKS and its subsidiary organizations for participating in civil action related to the Executive Director selection process.

The petition was delivered to HKS and the Department of Education on August 6, 2024. The deadline for a response from HKS was August 9, 2024. As of today, HKS has not responded to the petition.

The complete petition may be found on the DBLN website.²

Please investigate the matter and support the transition of HKNC into an autonomous DeafBlind-led organization.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Marc Safman with the DeafBlind Leadership NOW advocacy team at outreach@deafblindleadershipnow.org.

I look forward to your written reply.

Sincerely,

¹ HR 4749 Helen Keller National Center Reauthorization Act of 2023
<https://congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4749>

² DeafBlind Leadership NOW
<https://deafblindleadershipnow.org/petition.html>