
Dear Senator _____,

My name is _____ and live in _____. As a constituent, I am writing to express my deep concern about S. 2376 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) and is currently the only national comprehensive vocational rehabilitation training center for DeafBlind youths, adults, and seniors. HKS has failed to uphold its commitments to the DeafBlind community.

On July 22, 2024, HKS appointed a non-DeafBlind 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, 262 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. More than six months later, HKS CEO finally reached out to the head of DBLN advocacy. On February 11, 2025, it was clear HKS was not focused on DBLN's petition demands. We feel the shared model services with HKS for the Blind is preventing DeafBlind individuals from reaching their fullest potential to leadership and career success at HKNC. After all, it has been over half a century since HKNC has had a DeafBlind executive director at the helm.

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

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

I look forward to your written response.

Sincerely,

¹ S. 2376 Helen Keller National Center Reauthorization Act of 2023 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2376/history>

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