



# Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Jeremiah Nixon**  
*Governor*

**Opeoluwa Sotonwa**  
*Executive Director*

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## **DeafBlind Services Bill Truly Agreed and Finally Passed**

Jefferson City, MO (May 12, 2016) - This evening, the Missouri Legislature gave House Bill 1696, known as the SSP Bill, final approval. This bill is intended to initiate training and compensation for support service providers (SSPs) for individuals who are DeafBlind. The Senate gave its final approval Tuesday, and the House of Representatives gave its final approval today. Now that the bill has received final approval from both legislative bodies, the measure now goes to Governor Jeremiah Nixon for his signature.

If signed by the governor, this law will allow the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) to receive grant funding in order to create new programs to train and provide support services to DeafBlind individuals. The nature of the support services an SSP may provide varies widely based on the individual's needs. Common tasks that require an SSP may include traveling to and from work, navigating a grocery store, describing signage, or relaying information from written documents.

Missouri does not currently have a formal, statewide system for training or certifying SSPs. Many DeafBlind individuals typically rely on family members and friends to take care of these needs, which is often a barrier to their independence.

“Support services for DeafBlind individuals are different from those provided for people with only one sensory loss, such as a person who is only Deaf or Blind,” said Opeoluwa Sotonwa, Executive Director of the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. “Having a dual sensory loss comes with a unique set of challenges.”

“SSPs are the key to unlocking the valuable perspectives of DeafBlind people so they can contribute to Missouri's marketplace of ideas and workforce,” Sotonwa said.

The term DeafBlind is used to identify a person who has any combination of hearing loss and vision loss; an individual does not have to be completely Deaf and completely blind to identify as DeafBlind.

About MCDHH:

MCDHH works with individuals, service providers, businesses, organizations, and state agencies to improve the lives and opportunities of all Missourians with hearing loss. It functions as an agency of the state to advocate for public policies, regulations, and programs to improve the quality and coordination of existing services for individuals with hearing loss, and to promote new services whenever necessary. More information about MCDHH and the services it offers are available at <http://mcdhh.mo.gov>.

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