

Reps. Spade, Accavitti, Adamini, Anderson, Bieda, Brandenburg, Brown, Byrum, Caswell, Clack, Condino, Dennis, DeRossett, Ehardt, Elkins, Farhat, Farrah, Garfield, Gillard, Gleason, Hardman, Hoogendyk, Hopgood, Huizenga, Jamnick, Ruth Johnson, Koetje, Kolb, Kooiman, Law, Lipsey, Meyer, Milosch, Minore, Murphy, O'Neil, Paletko, Palmer, Pappageorge, Pastor, Plakas, Richardville, Rivet, Rocca, Sak, Shaffer, Sheltroun, Shulman, Stahl, Tabor, Taub, Tobocman, Vagnozzi, Vander Veen, Voorhees, Waters, Wojno and Zelenko offered the following resolution:

**House Resolution No. 185.**

A resolution recognizing the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Michigan Commission for the Blind.

Whereas, The legislation that created the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB), Public Act 260, was officially enacted in October of 1978, 25 years ago. The Michigan Commission for the Blind provides blind and visually impaired persons with opportunities for independence and employment through six direct service programs: rehabilitation services, deaf-blind services, the MCB Training Center, the Business Enterprise Program, the Independent Living Program and the Youth Low Vision Program. Public Act 260 of 1978, as amended, established the five-member, Governor-appointed Commission, three of whom shall be blind, to provide consumer input at the policymaking level; and

Whereas, For the first half of the twentieth century, services for the blind consisted of a sheltered workshop in Saginaw and the blind concession program. In the 1950s, the Michigan Department of Social Services assigned a few caseworkers to a "blind-only" caseload to provide financial and employment assistance. A few years later, the Department of Social Services combined the workshop, blind concessions, and these caseworkers into a Division of Services for the Blind. In the mid 1960s, a group of state legislators recognized that the broom making workshop in Saginaw presented the wrong image of blind workers and should be closed. After studying other state programs, they decided that a new facility should be constructed that emphasizes independence rather than sheltered work. As a result, the Michigan Rehabilitation Center for the Blind was opened in Kalamazoo, in 1970, for purposes of teaching blind persons the skills necessary for independence; and

Whereas, In the mid 1970s, organized blind consumers initiated legislation to create an agency structure where blind persons would play a major role in planning and policy making. The act also transferred the agency from Department of Social Services to the Department of Labor, and made the commission a partner with the federal government in providing employment services and vending facilities for blind persons. It also established a broad range of teaching and counseling roles and responsibilities. In the early 1980s, the Michigan Commission for the Blind gained state and federal funds to establish independent living services for older blind individuals, and state funds to establish low vision services for blind and visually impaired youth. In addition, the vending program was expanded to include cafeterias and highway vending locations at welcome centers and rest stops, the center in Kalamazoo was renamed the Michigan Commission for the Blind Training Center, a statewide deaf-blind service was established, and formal strategic planning began with the production of a mission statement, i.e., "To provide opportunities to blind persons to achieve employability and, or function independently in society."; and

Whereas, The 1990s have been highlighted by the Americans with Disabilities Act, a major anti-discrimination statute designed to remove barriers in employment, government services, and public accommodations, and the 1992 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act which calls for greater attention to client choice and independent living services. In 1996, the MCB was transferred from the abolished Department of Labor to the Department of Consumer and Industry Services to the Family Independence Agency (formerly Department of Social Services). In 1997, the Client Assistance Program was privatized. In 1998, the Workforce Investment Act was enacted, incorporating the newly-amended Rehabilitation Act, calling for greater interaction between rehabilitation agencies and local Workforce Boards; and

Whereas, Today, in addition to serving as the vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind, the Commission operates the residential training center in Kalamazoo, provides independent living services for Michigan's older blind population, low-vision services for the state's youth, deaf-blind services, and entrepreneurial opportunities for blind persons through its Business Enterprise Program; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That members of this legislative body join with the Commissioners and staff of the Michigan Commission for the Blind in commemorating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the state of Michigan.