**RESOLUTION 2020-01**

**REGARDING STATE CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES**

**FOR BLIND OR LOW-VISION BUSINESS OWNERS**

WHEREAS, the Ohio Office of Budget and Management indicates that the State of Ohio spends nearly $1 billion annually on goods and services purchased from private businesses; and

WHEREAS, Ohio local and county governments also offer $100 million in contracting opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the State of Ohio provides contract preferences through the MWBE program to minority- and women-owned businesses because of the economic disadvantages these businesses face; and

WHEREAS, the State of Ohio encourages state agencies only through the Encouraging Diversity, Growth, and Equity (EDGE) program to contract with businesses owned by blind individuals; and

WHEREAS, the State of Ohio does not offer any contract preferences or set-asides for individual blind business owners, despite the fact that Blind people face economic disadvantages because of the 70% unemployment rate among the Blind and because approximately 30% of them live below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, business ownership offers opportunities in many different fields, offers the blind the opportunity to earn significant income, and offers them the opportunity to reduce their unemployment rate significantly; and

WHEREAS, access to state government, school district, and county and local government agency contracting opportunities can significantly increase the chance for a blind business owner to succeed: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio in convention assembled this 7th day of November, 2020, that this organization call upon the State of Ohio either to expand the Ohio Encouraging Diversity, Growth, and Equity (EDGE) Program to require a mandatory permanent contract set-aside for individual blind business owners or to open the MWBE program to blind business owners.