May 18, 2023

Statement on Global Accessibility Awareness Day from 51 National Disability Advocates for Digital Inclusion

On Global Accessibility Awareness Day 2023, the undersigned national disability organizations celebrate the transformative impact of accessible technology and call on the federal government to require websites and software applications to be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. The roughly 61 million people with disabilities in the United States have a right to access employment, businesses, programs, and services, regardless of whether they are delivered in-person or online.

Accessible technology is essential to provide people with greater opportunities, independence, and privacy. Recent research has shown the reverse to be true as well. When people with disabilities cannot access websites or apps, they lose their privacy, experience social exclusion, waste time seeking alternatives, must wait for and pay for assistance, and even must forego goods and services that they need.

When customers with disabilities cannot access websites and apps, businesses lose access to a significant portion of their market. More than 40% of blind, low-vision, and deafblind respondents to a recent survey said they will switch to a different business if they encounter access barriers while using a website or app. And about 60% feel like they don't have as many choices as sighted people in which businesses to turn to for digital services.

Global Accessibility Awareness Day is an important annual event to celebrate and commit to accessible technology design and development and its benefits for individuals and organizations. To advance this goal, we call on the Department of Justice to move quickly to issue rules on website and application accessibility under titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We also urge Congress to acknowledge the need for accessibility in the virtual environment by reintroducing and passing the Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act. Ultimately, we urge all organizations,

businesses, and governments to act now to make their websites and apps fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Access Living

Access Ready

Accessible Avenue

accesSOS

ACMCRN Arachnoiditis & Chronic Meningitis Collaborative Research Network

Alström Syndrome International

American Association of People with Disabilities

American Association on Health and Disability

American Council of the Blind

American Foundation for the Blind

American Printing House for the Blind

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

Autistic People of Color Fund

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network

Blinded Veterans Association

Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc.

CommunicationFIRST

Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf

Congenital Hyperinsulinism International

Disability Policy Consortium

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Epilepsy Foundation

Genetic Alliance

International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis

Knowbility

Lakeshore Foundation

Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.

Multiple Sclerosis Foundation

National Association of the Deaf

National Disability Institute

National Disability Rights Network

National Federation of the Blind

National Industries for the Blind

National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision

NCIL

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Partnership to Improve Patient Care

Perkins School for the Blind

Prevent Blindness

PXE International

RetireSafe

Syngap1 Foundation

TDI (Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc)

Teach Access

The Arc of the United States

The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation

United Spinal Association

VisionServe Alliance

Whistle Blowers of America

For more information, contact:

Stephanie Enyart, senyart@afb.org

John Pare, jpare@nfb.org

Clark Rachfal, crachfal@acb.org

Claire Stanley, Claire.Stanley@ndrn.org