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Written testimony regarding Assembly Bill No. 332

My name is Jack Middleton. I am a blind guide dog user residing in Carson City, Nevada.

I applaud efforts to strengthen guide and service dog protections under Nevada law. I have serious reservations regarding this proposed legislation. I spent the month of February 2003 in San Rafael, California, receiving a replacement dog from Guide Dogs for the Blind, Inc. This is one of the oldest licensed guide dog schools in the country.

I applaud Section 3.1 because I am personally aware of people fraudulently misrepresenting themselves and their "pets" as service animals.

However, Section 4.1 supports misrepresentation. I wonder why anyone who is "legitimately" using a trained service animal and is asked for proof that the animal is appropriately trained would refuse to show such proof. I carry a Guide Dog Identification card issued by the school with my dog's serial number and picture and the dog's serial number is tattooed in his ear.

Regarding Section 9.1: Nevada has a number of 4H guide dogs in training. These dogs are placed with 4H families in Reno, Carson City and Douglas County for "obedience and socialization by exposure to the activities of everyday life in preparation for the advanced training required to become a service animal". This section would kill this excellent 4H program because it requires puppy raisers to be licensed and bonded with the State and have insurance.

Section 11 would require all guide dogs to be trained only by schools licensed by the State of Nevada Rehabilitation Division:

Sec. 11. NRS 426.085 is hereby amended to read as follows: "School for guide dogs" means a school which trains dogs to be guide dogs and which is [approved] licensed by the Division.

There are no guide dog schools in the State of Nevada. Passage of this change would essentially require the eighteen existing guide dog schools to apply and purchase an annual license from the State of Nevada. Failure to do so would mean that any blind resident or visitor to the State, using a guide dog, would not be protected under the provision of NRS 426. NRS 426 must protect all service dog users in our State in accordance with ADA. I believe that any revenue generated by this bill would be more than offset by its administrative costs.

Therefore, I oppose Assembly Bill 332 in its current form.