



South Carolina  
Commission for the Blind

**FY 2021-22 BUDGET HEARING**

# Agency Information

South Carolina Commission for the Blind



Our mission is to provide quality individualized vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services and prevention-of-blindness services to blind and visually impaired consumers, leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence.

# Agency Information

## South Carolina Commission for the Blind

We offer **specialized and personalized services for individuals age 3 and up who are blind or have vision loss** that lead to social and economic independence.

- ▶ **Employment:** In our Vocational Rehabilitation program we help eligible consumers find, maintain, or regain employment. We provide counseling and guidance, educational opportunities, vocational training, and assistive technology to prepare them for career opportunities.
  - ▶ Our Business Enterprise Program helps qualified individuals become entrepreneurs and operate their own vending or food service business.

# Agency Information

## South Carolina Commission for the Blind

- ▶ **Independence:** We help consumers remain independent within their homes and communities:
  - ▶ Children's Services assists children ages 3 to 12, ensuring they have assistive technology available at home (not just in school) and building confidence and self-sufficiency from an early age.
  - ▶ Older Blind Services assists those 55 and older in remaining independent by providing specialized training and low vision devices.
- ▶ **Prevention:** We provide financial assistance for sight-saving surgeries for individuals who don't have insurance and otherwise could not afford it. Education on blindness prevention and eye safety is also provided around the state.

# Recurring Budget Request

- ▶ **Salary Adjustment** — Recurring state dollars to better align SCCB salaries with state averages in positions that were not addressed in SFY 2019-20. This will help improve talent acquisition and retention.

Without a parity increase, SCCB's turnover will continue to be high as staff leave for similar positions in other state agencies that pay a higher salary. This affects services to consumers because there is a lack of consistency due to a constantly changing staff.

State HR recommendation for applying salary increases: Increases to base salaries, which will be different for each employee and based on years of service, up to a maximum of \$5,000, will be applied to all permanent FTE positions that did not receive parity increases in SFY 2019-20.

\$527,000

A circular badge with a yellow background and a dark blue border. The word "Priority" is written in dark blue at the top, and the number "1" is written in dark blue in the center.

Priority  
1

# Recurring Budget Request

- ▶ **Prevention of Blindness program** — Recurring state dollars to add one (1) new counselor FTE position and provide operating funds which would increase the number of citizens assisted and the services provided. This would bring funding closer to pre-2008 operating levels, as recommended by the Legislative Oversight Committee in 2017.

Costs of services to restore vision and/or prevent vision loss have significantly increased. Operating funds would help provide surgeries for citizens who have a correctable visual impairment.

\$150,000 (\$50,000 salary + \$100,000 operations = \$150,000)



# Recurring Budget Request

- ▶ **Older Blind Program** — Recurring state dollars to add one (1) new counselor FTE position and provide operating funds for the program. The new position would make it possible to reduce the number of consumers served by each counselor, thereby reducing wait times and allowing counselors to provide more comprehensive services.

Additional operating funds would assist consumers with the provision of low vision exams, assistive devices, and other specialized equipment, all of which helps them maintain their independence.

\$125,000 (\$50,000 salary + \$10,000 exams + \$50,000 devices/equipment + \$15,000 supplies = \$125,000)

A circular badge with a yellow background and a dark blue border. The word "Priority" is written in dark blue at the top, and the number "4" is written in dark blue in the center.

Priority  
4

# Capital Budget Request

- ▶ SCCB is requesting \$5,101,685 for replacement of the current HVAC system at its Columbia Campus.
- ▶ Parts of the current system are more than 50 years old; the system has become very unreliable and is not energy efficient.
- ▶ Repair technicians are called frequently as temperatures in offices and consumer areas fall or rise unexpectedly. Because of its age, it is difficult to repair the system.
- ▶ Staff and consumers are often adversely affected by the inability of this system to heat or cool the four (4) campus buildings.
- ▶ Temporary hotel accommodations have been necessary for residential program consumers during periods of HVAC repairs, creating disruption in services, extra challenges, and added expenses.
- ▶ Huge variances and inconsistencies in temperatures have led to the use of portable heaters and/or fans to help staff work comfortably.

Priority  
**2**

# Wrap-Up

- ▶ Thank you for your time and attention in considering our funding requests.
- ▶ SCCB provides services to SC citizens who may otherwise be reliant on greater public support.
- ▶ Our programs offer specialized and personalized services that lead to employment and independence, provide hope for an individual's future, and makes them proud and honored to be a citizen of this great state.