

Statement of Paul A. Strachan, President
American Federation of the Physically Handicapped
1370 National Press Building, Washington 4, D. C. (Phone: Republic 7-1314)
To: Senate Subcommittee on Labor and Public Welfare
On: S. 2570, to Establish a FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED.
Wednesday, April 7, 1954

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman:

The most important problem before the Nation today is, safeguarding and improving the health and economic conditions of our own citizenry.

Rehabilitation and Employment of our 38,000,000 Handicapped citizens, including the Blind, Partially Sighted, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Amputees, Arthritics, Cardiacs, Cerebral Palsied, Diabetics, Epileptics, victims of Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, Poliomyetitis, Rheumatism, Tuberculosis, and other "crippers", as well as those having Congenital Defects and Deformities, is, of necessity, of prime concern to you, and to all Members of Congress, generally.

After more than 40 years of study and practice in this field, and in the light of the multitude of needs of our Handicapped people, we have developed and there is now pending before you, the bill, S.2570, to Establish a FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED.

THIS BILL DOES WHAT NO OTHER BILL NOW PENDING PROPOSES: It provides a practical blue-print of a program - not just an excuse for a program, - to show you, and all others, a clearly defined plan. It is not vague, nor does it evade meeting issues that have been ignored, largely, by existing Federal agencies. In short, it shows exactly what is proposed to be done for the Handicapped, - what agency would be best qualified to do it; how the job would be done; to whom it would be done; the cost, and the results. TODAY, THERE IS NO COORDINATION of 35 agencies now existing, each having a piece of the program.

We respectfully point out the necessity of establishing this Agency, not only for the advancement of welfare of Handicapped, themselves, but for the benefit of the whole Nation, and, briefly, the bill would -

1. Establish an Independent Agency, based for housekeeping purposes in the Department of Labor.
2. Establish in said Agency, an Advisory Council on Affairs of the Handicapped, consisting of three representing Employers; three representing Labor; three representing Physically Handicapped, themselves, (who, after all, are the chief persons concerned, and who, therefore, should and must be so represented,); three to represent Farmers and Stock-raisers, and three experienced in public affairs.
3. Establishes an Office of Services for Blind in the Agency and brings into it all far-flung agencies for blind now in Federal Service, thus consolidating and making more efficient such services.
4. Establishes Cooperative Enterprises for Handicapped Revolving Fund, with \$10,000,000 as initial appropriation, to take the first step towards providing Handicapped a practical means to be trained in business and job conditions, so they may stand on their own feet, and gradually get away from the pitifully inadequate and uneconomic so-called Public Assistance programs, which, at best, are only stop-gaps, and in addition to being a continual drain upon the finances of the people, solve nothing and provide no permanent remedies.
5. Establishes a Federal Inter-Agency Committee on Rehabilitation and Employment of Handicapped, to coordinate activities of the present 35 Federal Agencies each of which, now, has a piece of the program. We respectfully point out the necessity for establishing such Committee. Previous testimony before this Committee has concentrated upon the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation with one or two corollary agencies in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and have completely ignored the fact that a multitude of activities, costing hundreds of millions of dollars annually, which are within the orbit

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of an over-all Handicapped program, are very much in the picture. Such agencies, surely, as good business policy, should have one focal point, the proposed Inter-Agency Committee, through which the results of their efforts could and would be evaluated. This would not only prevent useless duplication of effort, an expense, but would facilitate continual improvement in the over-all program.

6. Provides a \$60 monthly Federal grant to totally disabled persons, who are unfeasible for rehabilitation. It is pointed out that this grant provides a Federal base, to which States may add additional sums, as it is clear that no person, totally, disabled and unable to support himself or herself, could be medically treated; fed, clothed and housed, to say nothing of necessary incidental living expenses, on \$60 per month.

Further, the \$60 would NOT be given, unless competent medical examinations, once yearly, prove such person to be totally disabled, and unfeasible for rehabilitation. In short, the initial placement of a person on such grant does not mean such person is so supported eternally, as is often now the case, but, they would have to prove, by annual examinations, that they are still unfeasible in every way for rehabilitation.

7. Provides \$5,000,000 initial, and \$2,000,000 annual continuing appropriation, for grants for training of home-bound persons.

This is very important, since, particularly in rural areas, today, there is little or no means for providing this essential service at all, and given such training, many such home-bound, could support themselves, wholly, or in part.

8. Provides \$10,000,000 Revolving Loan Fund, from which States which have exhausted their appropriations for rehabilitation may borrow, between sessions of their own Legislatures.

It may surprise the Committee to know that, despite under present laws, wherein the Federal contribution takes care of administrative expenses of the State set-ups, on an annual basis, yet, because of exhaustion of appropriations, prevent States from rendering any actual services to Handicapped FOR MORE THAN HALF THE TIME.

9. Establishes a Division of Handicapped in the United States Civil Service Commission. As we are dealing with millions of Handicapped, including Disabled Veterans, facilitating their examinations, tests for physical capacities, and ultimate appointment, make such Division imperative.
10. Provides for promotion of public safety programs designed to safeguard life and limb on Federal property. This, no doubt, would save the Government millions of dollars in present cost of accidents and disease.
11. Provides for reports from Federal agencies having parts of the Handicapped program, so that there would be a continual and continuing check on over-all activities, and improvements designed and applied, in the light of experience.
12. Provides special programs for the Severely Handicapped, (those from 60 to 100% disabled,) of whom it is estimated, on basis of composite reports from all reliable public and private agencies that there are now from 7,000,000 to 9,000,000 in such categories.
13. Provides for Rehabilitation Centers throughout the Nation. This is a vital necessity to development of

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the program.

14. Establishes a Federal Second Injury Tax and Fund, something which has been vitally needed for the past 50 years, and which, when functioning, will enable hundreds of thousands of Severely Handicapped, with multiple disabilities, to secure and hold remunerative employment, and thus be enabled to support themselves, their families, and make their contribution to the Nation, as a whole, by paying Federal, State, County and Municipal taxes.
15. Provides legal definitions of Physically Handicapped person, and, persons who are totally disabled and unfeasible for rehabilitation. Lack of clear definitions, today, are not only confusing, but often seriously obstruct the application of benefits needed by the individual.

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The foregoing, Mr. Chairman, is more definitively outlined in the statement which I made, In July, 1953, to the House Committee on Education and Labor, and I am attaching and sending a copy of this statement to each Member of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, with respectful request that Members give it careful study, as it outlines each section of S. 2570, so that you will know exactly what is intended, and what, when established, the FEDERAL AGENCY FOR HANDICAPPED will be prepared to do.

Such a program, Mr. Chairman - and I emphasize "program" - rather than "bill", is essential today, both as a means of providing vitally important manpower for our national defense, and to develop continuing means of medical, educational, guidance, and placement services for all Handicapped who require such services.

We are today at the point where, as a matter of national policy, we must determine whether or not we shall continue the expensive fallacy of so-called Public Assistance, which produces nothing, and provides no remedies other than meagre, temporary aid, or, that we shall make a capital investment in the individual Handicapped citizens and get them onto their feet so they may make their own contribution to our economic and social life, and be tax-payers, instead of tax-eaters.

Our Federation, with associated organizations supporting this necessary program, brings to you the pleas of more than 15,000,000 American citizens to support this bill 100%. Enactment of this bill would not disturb the basic principles of the present Federa-State setup.

For the betterment of our people, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, and for the preservation of our Nation, itself, we respectfully urge that you substitute S.2570 for all other pending measures, which are totally inadequate, unrealistic, and will do nothing more than continue the miserably ineffective, inefficient, and unbusinesslike present programs.