



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Walmart Sued by Blind Maryland Residents over Self-Service Checkout Kiosks**

### **National Federation of the Blind and Its Maryland Affiliate Also Plaintiffs**

**Baltimore, Maryland (October 26, 2018):** When Cynthia Morales and her boyfriend Linwood Boyd, who are both blind, made a routine trip to a Walmart in Owings Mills in late July of 2017, they didn't expect to have to get the police involved.

But that was the result of a chain of events that began with Ms. Morales trying to use one of the self-service checkout kiosks that Walmart makes available to shoppers as an alternative to waiting in line for a cashier. Although the kiosks do issue some spoken prompts, those prompts don't provide enough information for a blind person to use the machines independently. Ultimately, Ms. Morales asked for help from a Walmart employee, who completed the checkout transaction but also, unbeknownst to Ms. Morales and Mr. Boyd, requested forty dollars in cash back, which the employee pocketed. Because no audio prompt gave Ms. Morales the total of her transaction, she didn't realize anything was wrong until the machine audibly prompted the user to take the money. Ms. Morales and Mr. Boyd then had a bystander outside the store read them the receipt; at that point, they realized they had been charged an additional forty dollars. The money was ultimately returned, but Ms. Morales and Mr. Boyd decided to do their regular shopping at a Walmart Supercenter in Randallstown from then on.

Now they, together with Melissa Sheeder—another blind Marylander; the National Federation of the blind (NFB); and the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland (NFB-MD) are suing Walmart under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The suit asks the Maryland federal district court to order the giant retailer to make its self-service checkout kiosks fully accessible to blind shoppers.

Similar devices, such as ATMs, Amtrak ticket kiosks, and airline check-in kiosks, as well as some point-of-sale terminals like those in the back of many taxicabs, can be used independently by blind people. Usually voice prompts are spoken through headphones, and blind users respond with tactile keypads or accessible touch screens. The NFB has offered to work with Walmart to make its kiosks accessible, but Walmart has declined the offer.

“What happened to Cindy Morales is an extreme example of what can occur when companies like Walmart deploy inaccessible self-checkout or point-of-sale technology,” said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. “The real problem is that Walmart has decided to treat blind customers differently from sighted customers. Walmart’s refusal to deploy readily available technology to give blind shoppers the same choice sighted shoppers have—whether to check ourselves out or visit a cashier—makes us second-class customers. That is unlawful and unacceptable.”

The plaintiffs are represented by Eve L. Hill, Jessica P. Weber, and Chelsea J. Crawford of the Baltimore law firm Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP.

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### **About the National Federation of the Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), headquartered in Baltimore, is the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind Americans. Founded in 1940, the NFB consists of affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. The NFB defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality. Learn more about our many programs and initiatives at [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org).

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