



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Blind Patient Receives Settlement from Nash Hospitals, Inc.**

*National Federation of the Blind and Disability Rights North Carolina Also Parties*

**Raleigh, North Carolina (December 2, 2020):** Nash Hospitals, Inc. will pay \$150,000 in damages and attorneys' fees to settle legal claims by a blind Rocky Mount, NC man whom Nash General Hospital refused to provide written materials in Braille. The National Federation of the Blind, America's civil rights organization of the blind, and Disability Rights North Carolina also agreed to not pursue further litigation against Nash Hospitals, Inc. for its past failures to provide written materials in formats accessible to the blind.

John Bone received emergency medical care at Nash General Hospital. Mr. Bone's claims stemmed from his inability to read bills and other communications from Nash relating to his medical care because they were not provided to him in Braille, either at all or on a timely basis, resulting in collection agencies pursuing him for debts that he was unaware he owed. Importantly, these debts are also being forgiven as part of the settlement.

Following the settlement, Nash Hospitals, Inc. is no longer part of the lawsuit, but litigation against the other defendant named in the lawsuit, the UNC Health Care System, will continue. Timothy Miles, Mr. Bone, the National Federation of the Blind, and Disability Rights NC allege that UNC Health Care System systematically discriminates against blind people by failing to provide them written information in formats they can access, such as large print, Braille, and accessible electronic formats, that enable them to participate in their care and make timely payments on their medical bills.

"With today's technology, providing bills, medical records, and treatment instructions in alternative formats, such as Braille and large print, is readily achievable," said Mark Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind. "We believe this settlement sends a strong message that medical providers should take this legal and moral obligation seriously. We are happy to work with healthcare entities who want guidance in providing medical information in accessible formats."

Virginia Knowlton Marcus, chief executive officer of Disability Rights NC, applauded Mr. Bone's steadfast insistence that he has a right to know how much he owed for the care he received. "Sighted people count on receiving printed bills from their healthcare providers, reviewing the charges, and negotiating with medical providers and the insurance company if they believe they were charged incorrectly," she said. "Blind patients like Mr. Bone should not have to wrangle for their right to billing information in a format they can access, or live in fear of building up late fees and damaging their credit due to bills that are impossible for them to read."

The plaintiffs are represented by the attorneys of [Disability Rights NC](#) and the Baltimore law firm of [Brown Goldstein & Levy](#).

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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).

### **About Disability Rights North Carolina**

Disability Rights North Carolina is the federally mandated protection and advocacy system in North Carolina, dedicated to advancing the rights of all people with disabilities, of all ages, statewide. DRNC is an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a member of the National Disability Rights Network. Learn more about Disability Rights North Carolina at [disabilityrightsn.org](http://disabilityrightsn.org).

### **CONTACT:**

Chris Danielsen  
Director of Public Relations  
National Federation of the Blind  
(410) 659-9314, extension 2330  
(410) 262-1281 (Cell)  
[cdanielsen@nfb.org](mailto:cdanielsen@nfb.org)

Holly Stiles  
Litigation Counsel  
Disability Rights North Carolina  
919-856-2195  
[holly.stiles@disabilityrightsn.org](mailto:holly.stiles@disabilityrightsn.org)