



South Carolina  
Commission for the Blind

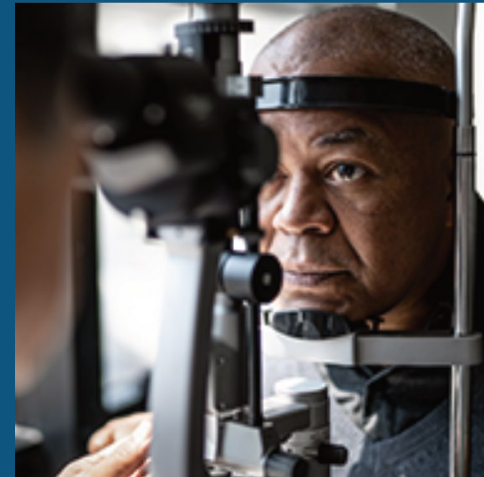
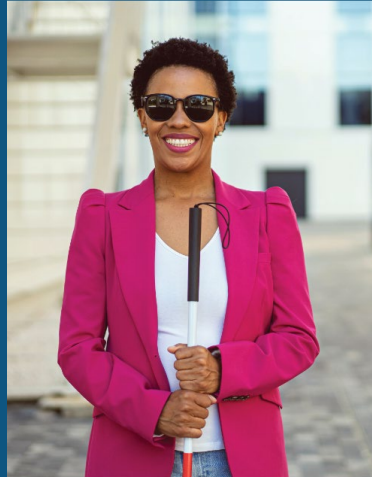
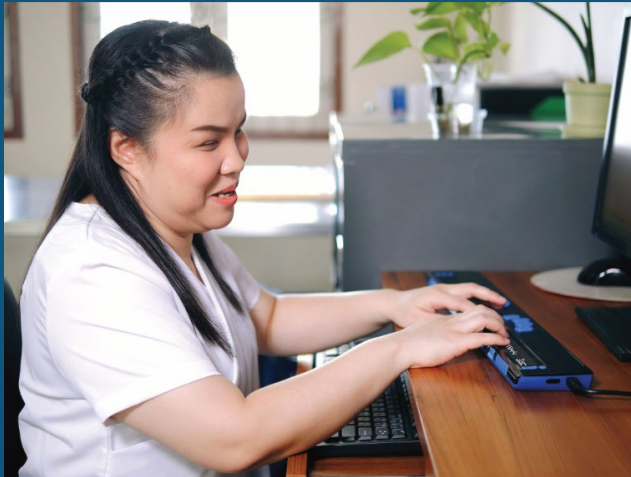
**FY 2025-26 BUDGET HEARING**

# Agency Officials

- ▶ Darline Graham, Commissioner
- ▶ Luis Mendoza, Director of Administration
- ▶ Carol Anderson, Consumer Services Director
- ▶ Ryan Skinner, Business Enterprise Program Director
- ▶ Nikki Green, Consumer Services Lead

# Mission

South Carolina Commission for the Blind



To provide quality individualized vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services and prevention-of-blindness services to blind and low vision consumers, leading to competitive employment and/or social and economic independence.

# Agency Overview

## South Carolina Commission for the Blind

**EMPLOYMENT:** Offering **specialized and personalized services** that lead to employment and/or social and economic independence **for individuals who are blind or have low vision**

### ▶ Vocational Rehabilitation

- ▶ Helps eligible consumers find, maintain, or regain employment
- ▶ Includes a residential component
- ▶ Consumers may receive counseling and guidance, educational opportunities, vocational training, and assistive technology to prepare for career opportunities

### ▶ Business Enterprise Program

- ▶ Helps qualified individuals become self-employed vending or food service facility operators

# Agency Overview

## 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,
- ▶ Ensures they have assistive technology available at home
- ▶ Helps with building confidence and self-sufficiency from an early age

### **PREVENTION**

- ▶ Financial assistance for sight-saving surgeries for individuals who meet financial need requirements
- ▶ Education on blindness prevention and eye safety

# Agency Overview

## South Carolina Commission for the Blind

### ▶ Older Blind Services

- ▶ Assists those 55 and older not interested in employment
- ▶ Statewide low vision assessments
- ▶ Helps consumers remain independent by providing specialized training and low vision devices



# Older Blind

## Increasing Older Population

- ▶ South Carolina's older population increasing each year
  - ▶ Aging (baby boomers)
  - ▶ More individuals retiring to SC
- ▶ Vision and eye problems increase with age
  - ▶ Macular degeneration
  - ▶ Glaucoma
  - ▶ Diabetic retinopathy
  - ▶ Cataracts

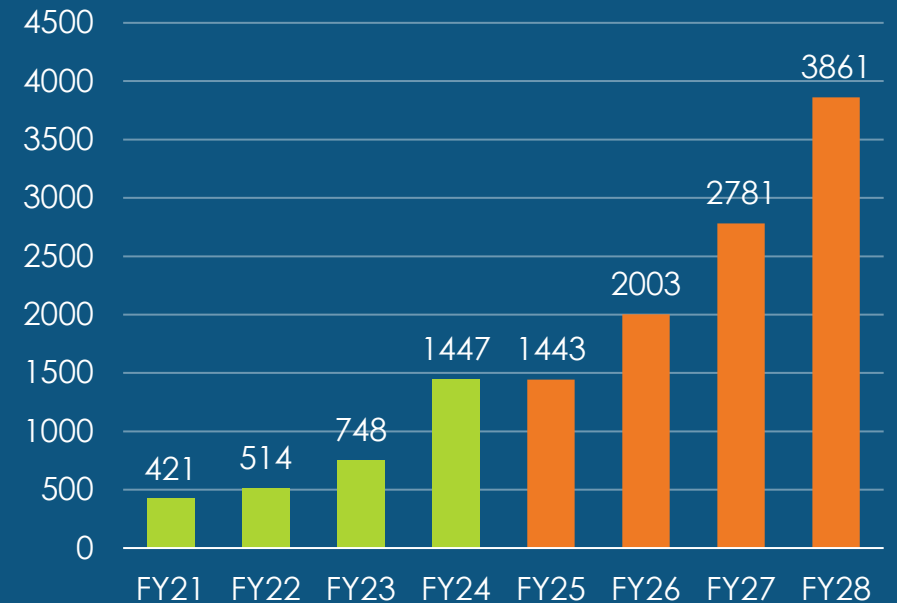


# Older Blind

## Increase in Consumers

- ▶ More than 1,400 received Older Blind Services in FY24, 700 more than in FY23
- ▶ State assistance critical to help meet needs of additional consumers
  - ▶ Added 2 FTEs in FY25 to provide more services to more consumers
  - ▶ Additional program funds help provide increased services and assistive technology devices

Increase in Older Blind Consumers Seeking Services



Green = actual number of consumers served  
Orange = projected number of consumers



# Business Enterprise Program

## Vending locations statewide

- ▶ Blind Licensed Vendors (BLVs) operate 83 vending facilities across the state
  - ▶ Includes 28 stand-alone rest stops and welcome centers along interstate highways
  - ▶ New micro markets and accessible kiosks
- ▶ Upgrades in FY24-25
  - ▶ More than 150 new snack machines installed statewide in FY24
  - ▶ Renovations to sites/facilities (such as updating roofs and adding security gates at rest areas)



# Business Enterprise Program

## Fort Jackson

SCCB holds one of the largest military contracts in the United States: operating dining facilities at Fort Jackson

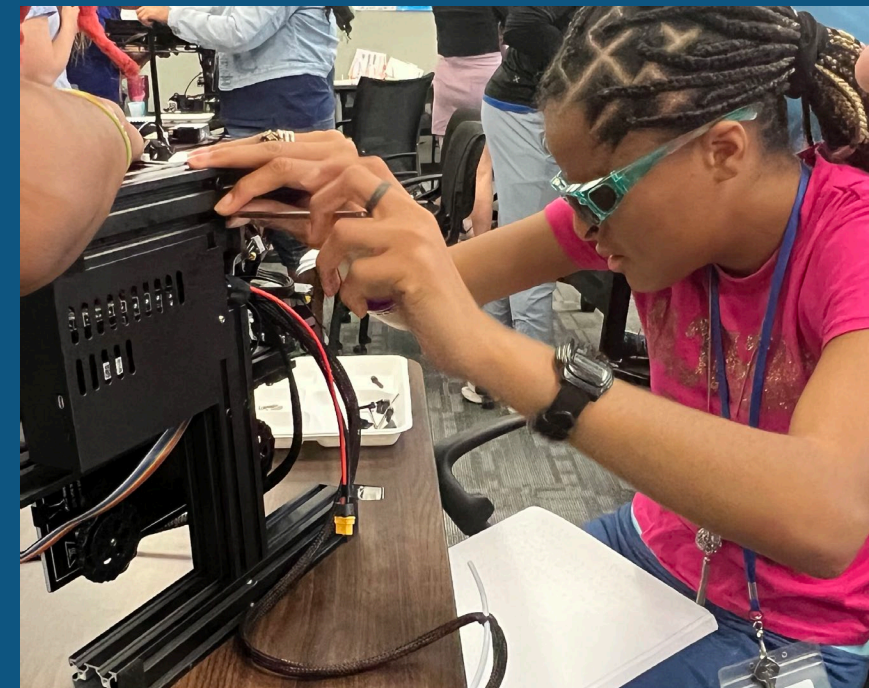
- ▶ Blind Licensed Vendors operate 10 warrior restaurants
  - ▶ Serve a combined average of 750,000 meals each month
- ▶ BEP Piloted and implemented the US Army's first "grab and go" market, serving an average of 6,000 meals each month



# Pre-employment Transition Services

## Summer Teen 2024

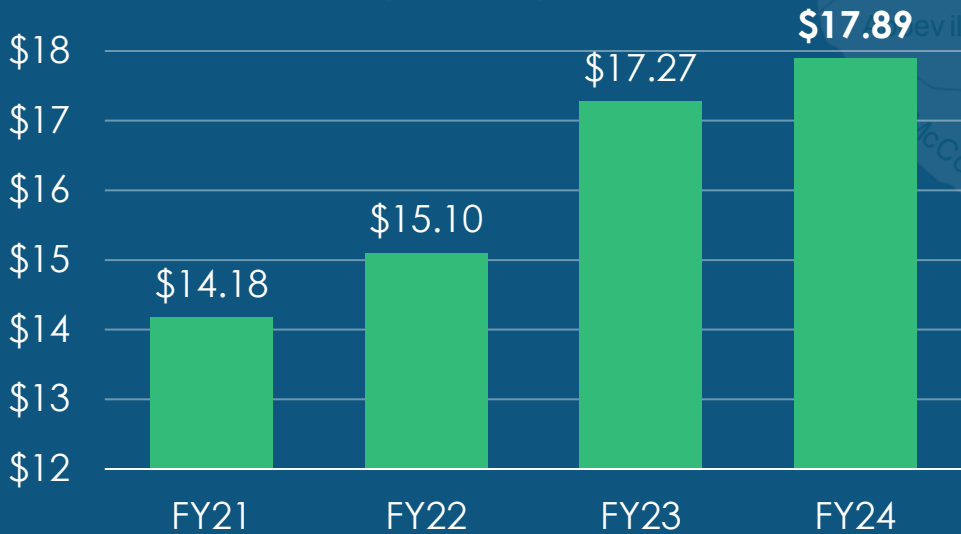
- ▶ 30 students aged 13-21 from across the state participated in residential programming held on the University of South Carolina's Columbia campus:
  - ▶ Planned travel throughout the Columbia area using different transportation (ride share, public transportation, etc.)
  - ▶ Learned about personal finance and budgeting
  - ▶ Some completed work-based learning experiences with local employers



# Vocational Rehabilitation

## Competitive Integrated Employment

Increase in average wage / hour



\$34,000+ (FY24)



\$25,406 (FY22)

Average salary

### Position

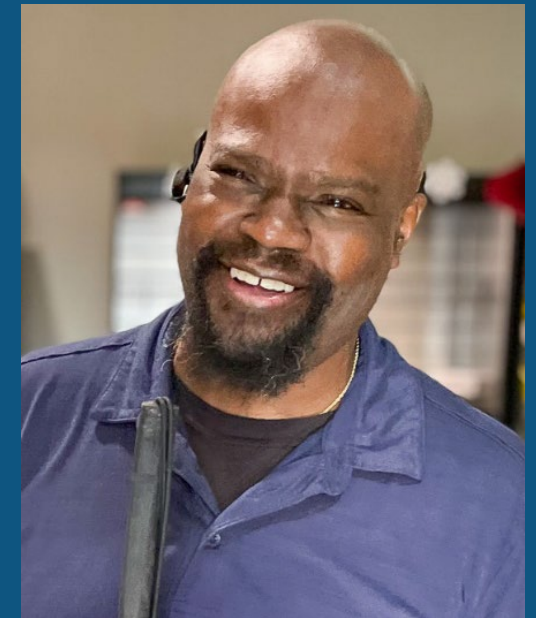
Position	Hourly Wage
Financial Manager	\$72.12
Manager (Banking)	\$60.10
Manager	\$54.00
Registered Nurse	\$31.80
Manager (Maxim Global)	\$28.85
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	\$26.00

# SCCB Success Stories



Jake Johnson, Protective Services  
Emergency Management Consultant  
Bon Secours Mercy Health  
Greenville, South Carolina

Willie Patrick, Blind Licensed Vendor,  
operates a micro market serving the  
Blythewood headquarters of the  
Department of Public Safety and the  
Department of Motor Vehicles



**Success stories included in packet**

# Wrap-Up

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Thank you for your time, attention and support.