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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Deaf Referee Sues Georgia High School Association

Macon, Georgia—

Donald Jacobs, a deaf basketball referee, has filed suit for discrimination based on disability against the Georgia High School Association (GHSAA), an organization which regulates the provision of referees for interscholastic events in Georgia. GHSAA has repeatedly refused requests by Jacobs and the National Association of the Deaf to provide sign language interpreters for its referee training camps. GHSAA's refusal to provide meaningful access for Jacobs violates the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For the past four years, Jacobs has worked as a high school referee in Georgia and uses sign language interpreters. Without interpreters for the referee training camps, Jacobs is unable to benefit from the program which is required for referees to polish their skills and advance in the field to higher paying positions.

Jacobs loves the spirit of high school athletics and said, "I learn so much from working with high school athletes and I like to think they learn something from me too." Jacobs added, "I just want the same opportunities as other referees. My earning potential shouldn't be limited because I am deaf."

"No person should be excluded from opportunities and advancements simply because that person is deaf, much less by any entity that stands for 'promotion of education in Georgia from a mental, physical, and moral viewpoint' such as GSHA," said Howard A. Rosenblum, CEO of the National Association of the Deaf. "We expect GSHA to demonstrate good sportsmanship and legal compliance by ensuring that its training programs are accessible to all."

Jacobs is represented by the National Association of the Deaf, Stein & Vargas, LLP, and the Georgia Advocacy Office.

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The National Association of the Deaf is the nation's premier civil rights organization of, by, and for, deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States.

Georgia Advocacy Office is the Protection & Advocacy System for the State of Georgia.

Stein & Vargas, LLP is a civil rights firm based in Washington, D.C. and committed to the principle that all people have full and equal access to all parts of society.

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