SUMMARY
The Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) assists individuals who are blind or who are experiencing a vision loss, receive assistance to enable them to acquire the skills necessary for competitive or self-employment and to increase their independence in their communities. The Division provides a variety of services that include orientation and mobility or cane travel training, vocational counseling, Braille training, assistive technology, vision screening, and competitive job placement services.

OBJECTIVE
This brief provides information on the Division’s request to increase outreach and rural service opportunities to the blind and visually impaired.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS
Outreach and Rural Services - $132,865
The Division estimates that 20 percent of the State’s blind and visually impaired individuals live in rural areas. Individuals living in Utah’s rural communities that are blind or visually impaired are not able to access services offered by the Division on an ongoing basis. Services provided by DSBVI in Salt Lake City are not available to rural residents. Clients living in rural communities must travel to Salt Lake City to participate in the full-time training program. These individuals receive training in cane travel, Braille, activities of daily living, and adaptive technology. When returning home, these clients must apply their new skills and training to their specific living situation or environment.

To be functional in employment and in their communities, these clients must receive the necessary ongoing adaptive technology and training provided by DSBVI. These services are provided to ensure that devices and services are accessible to all clients. Many barriers to employment can be removed by the application of appropriate technology solutions. Currently, the Division has one Adaptive Technology Specialist who is capable of training 70 clients per year. This individual is responsible for evaluating the technology needs of each client, training clients in the use of that technology, and evaluating jobsites.

To provide services to the blind and visually impaired in Utah’s rural communities, DSBVI is requesting funding to hire and train six part-time temporary employees to better serve this population throughout the rural areas of Utah. These part-time employees will each provide service to additional consumers with the goal of achieving employment and independence.

In addition, DSBVI anticipates hiring a full-time Adaptive Technology Specialist. This specialist will provide evaluation, demonstration and training in adaptive technology for the blind and visually impaired.

Recommendation: the subcommittee may wish to evaluate the request for $132,865 to provide ongoing service to clients in rural communities and prioritize this request with other items before the subcommittee.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION
This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations presented in this brief.

1. Consider the request for $132,865 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to be appropriated to the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide for increased rural ongoing services.