

TRULINCS 75913067 - KEITER, JACOB A - Unit: SCH-B-B

---

FROM: 75913067

TO: Keiter, Julie; Weidman, Drew

SUBJECT: Being Blind In prison Article

DATE: 01/23/2021 08:20:25 AM

I regret to inform you that I currently suffer from diagnosed myopia. Okay, so it's not nearly as bad as it may sound, and it's not necessarily anything new. Myopia is just a fancy scientific way of saying my vision's impaired, and that I'm near-sighted.

Being considered legally blind has been the single biggest struggle for the majority of my life. I remember as a little kid, whenever I received my first pair of glasses, I looked up into the sky and explained to my mother what a cloud finally looked like. Before then I just assumed they were streaming white blurs suspended in the sky. Name calling such as "nerd" and "four-eyes" never necessarily has a negative effect on me. The only thing that's ever really bothered me is imagining another day of living without my glasses. As a child I was warned by optometrists that one day my vision will be so severely impaired that glasses may not work in the future. This has forever been my most extreme fear.

Being able to see and staying aware of your surroundings is especially important in a prison setting. There are so many unstable and unpredictable individuals here. You never know when you may be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and something may trigger or pop off right in your vicinity.

Upon entering the BOP, you are greeted with an initial orientation segment. This orientation introduces to the inmates, the various departments around the facility and what they have to offer. After hearing about the education and recreation departments, I was specifically interested in what medical service had to offer. I was informed that medical offers general health care, chronic and urgent care, a pharmacy, a dentist, psychology services, and lastly and most important to me, vision care. I don't currently take any medication and I can claim that I am fairly healthy. Aside from a few crooked teeth, I brush and floss daily and keep up with general dental hygiene. As long as I have a pen and paper, that's all the venting I need and I don't feel I need to see a shrink. But I do require serious care for my eyes. Sign me up!

Immediately I inquired what I must do to see the optometrist. I was instructed to fill out a request and I'd be placed on the waiting list, sounds simple enough. So I did just that, and waited. As another month passed by, I filled out another request and continued to wait. I repeated this process numerous times. I began to notice inmates arriving at the facility after me, or those who don't even require attention to vision care receiving eye treatment before me. This frustrated me more and more as my vision strained and worsened through my current prescription glasses. Almost two years have passed by, and I have yet to have an eye appointment.

Until one day, I was heading to work as I do every morning and I was stopped by a staff of medical. "Hey, do you want an eye appointment?" He simply asked me. I quickly agreed and was instructed to head to medical immediately, and I will be excused from work. It turns out the optometrist arrived unannounced and had no appointments scheduled for the day. Since I was noticed wearing glasses, the staff assumed I needed an eye appointment. After two years of trying diligently to see the eye doctor, this is how I'm able to. By luck.

I've participated in dozens of eye appointments throughout my lifetime, and this was by far the most unusual. Expecting to stare at a hot air balloon as I patiently await my fate of a sudden burst of air striking my eye, or identifying if number one or number two is more clear, this one went in another direction. The optometrist took my glasses and scanned my lenses under a machine that printed out a receipt. He then flashed a flashlight in my eyes and pushed on my temple. Finally he asked me if I wanted brown or black frames. That was the entire appointment, I kid you not. This lasted under three minutes. There wasn't even a giant "E" present in the room.

Thankfully the prescription I ended up receiving was accurate and an improvement from my previous prescription. This experience just helped me realize how severe of a crisis our nation's health care is truly facing, no matter where you're at.