

Reaction to HB6380

When I became blind at age 41 The State of Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind, hereinafter known as BESB, responded to my need for rehabilitation services within a reasonable period of time. Adult Services met with me gathering necessary information then referring me to Rehabilitation Services. A home instructor was assigned to teach me how to mark products I cook with such as salt, pepper, herbs, spices, and food so I could easily and independently find these items. We marked my stove and oven knobs so I could adjust the cooking element to the temperature I needed to cook food at. My teacher gave me much hands on experience in the kitchen and was specific about cooking safely. Occasionally she would have me cook a breakfast or lunch using the oven and stove top so I would know that I can manage the oven and stove safely. Around the house we would move to help me better access the telephone, cell phone, television remote and other items that I might use in my normal day. She showed me several ways of marking clothes in my closet by colors so my outfits were color coordinated. If I had colored socks, she showed me how to keep the correct color socks together. Since becoming blind, I am particular about my personal appearance and hygiene as well as keeping my home in order. It has been 23 years since becoming legally blind and completely blind since 1993, and cooking, housekeeping, grocery shopping, and entertaining guests is as natural blind as it would be with vision thanks to BESB.

When I first became blind, I returned to college training in Social Services, BESB was able to offer me seed money to return to college along with funds I received from Pell Grants, and academic scholarships throughout my undergraduate studies in Social Work and my graduate work in Counselling

I have been involved in several community agencies on a volunteer basis: serving on the East Hartford Commission on Services for Persons with Disabilities, A member of the E. H. Women's Club chairing the Touch Book Committee. We make educational materials for blind pre-school children and giving these materials to Children's Services Unit of BESB where the home instructors use these books to train parents to teach their visually impaired child to read large print, feel the tactile print letters/words, and learn the Braille in twin-vision books. We have dome numbers, shapes, and contrasts. These books have been well received. As we are making these books for BESB, they provide our committee with Braille paper. The committee purchases the other materials needed for these books. Most Wednesday afternoons I can be found at The Friendship Center helping put together snack packages for those patrons who will come that evening for dinner. I am involved in Hospice and co-facilitate 2 Bereavement groups. I am the Coordinator/facilitator of Sweet Talk, a Diabetes Support Group at Manchester Hospital. I coordinated and am President of the East of the River Chapter of the National

Federation of the Blind. There is more that I do in community; but, I have highlighted the most significant ones for you to show that my education has given me the knowledge base necessary along with a sense of worthiness that life does not cease when one becomes blind but life continues in new, worthwhile and purposeful ways. I am known in the East Hartford area because I am "out there" working and educating the People I work with and the public that being blind does not prevent me from living, working, and traveling independently.

Please keep BESB its own separate agency so that other blind people will be able to access needed services to live and work independently. Blind people are your working, tax-paying, and voting constituents. It is, therefore, more economically sound to help us remain independent. If our agency is unbrellaed in with other special needs groups, I am fearful the blind will not receive necessary and needed services in an efficient timely manner.

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