

March 3, 2011

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Please do not approve House Bill #6380 to eliminate the Board of Education and Services for the Blind. We believe that the consolidation of this agency into two larger State agencies will jeopardize the cohesive structure of services to all blind children and adults in the State of Connecticut.

We are writing to you today as the parents of our 23 year old son, Eric, who has been legally blind since birth and is a "success story" in life thanks to BESB. Eric received services from BESB from 6 months of age through college. The services BESB provided to Eric enabled him to assimilate to our visual world. Due to the services and training provided by BESB, Eric was able to excel in the educational setting as well as with extracurricular activities. He was mainstreamed throughout his education and he turned out to be an outstanding student in East Lyme and later at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY, where he graduated with a BS in Computer Science. BESB's seamless coordination of services provided training and resources to Eric that enabled him to stay at or above grade level throughout his education. The expertise that BESB provided to us as a family and to Eric's educators was paramount to his learning.

Today Eric is working as a main frame programmer/analyst for NY Life. He is a successful, independent young man living his life fully due in no small part to BESB. Eric is a cane handler. His mobility skills are a direct result of the outstanding BESB mobility instruction he received from day one. BESB is and should continue to be a leading educator to the blind in the State of Connecticut. Educating our blind community successfully should not be compromised.

Thank you members of the Appropriations Committee for your dedicated service to our State government and the blind community therein. It is with utmost pride and thanks that we as parents tell you about the successes of our son, Eric.

Sincerely,

Janet and Steve Brinkman  
48 South Cobblers Court  
Niantic, CT 06357