

Burns, Vanessa

From: Carmi81284@aol.com
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2011 8:48 PM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Cc: richardcognata@sbcglobal.net
Subject: (no subject)

Dear Senator/Representative :

I am writing in regards to Senate Bill 387, An Act Consolidating Various State Agencies.

As my son is a blind client served by BESB (the Board of Education and Services for the Blind), I strongly object to such a maneuver.

BESB is the oldest agency serving blind people in the country, and is considered a model agency by many states. Overall consumer satisfaction with the agency is 84% (2009 survey). At approximately 50%, the unemployment rate for blind people of working age in CT is 25% better than the national average. At 95%, high school graduation rates for Connecticut's blind students are nearly 40% better than the national average. 70% of seniors, the fastest growing population of people suffering from vision loss (due to diabetes, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma), report increased independence and quality of life improvements after receiving services from BESB. Blind people in CT receive over 10,000 hours of assistance annually from BESB volunteers.

Simply put, these figures will change drastically for the worse if BESB is consolidated into bureaucracies which have never dealt with blind people. These successes are due to being an autonomous agency with a continuum of services.

The cost savings to the state would be minimal, especially in comparison to the hopelessness inflicted upon the lives of blind citizens in Connecticut if such a consolidation were to occur.

Remember, blindness rates are increasing. This could very easily happen to your parents, your children. It could easily be you.

My son lost his eye sight at the age of 27 and with BESB's help he was able to rebuild his life and become a contributing member of society. I can't urge you strongly enough to kill this bill.

Imagine being 27 years old, the father of a toddler, hard working man and suddenly your life is turned upside down. All the things that were "normal" for him were gone and he had to wake up to complete darkness every day. Relearn the simplest of daily activities and deal with the loss of job; loss of life as he knew it. Without BESB I don't know how he would have gotten this far.

They have helped him learn to live alone, deal with the trials of being blind in a seeing man's world. They have been there to educate him on those things we take for granted every day ie. walking out the front door of his house and making his way through life. They trained him to communicate through the use of a computer that talks to him; imagine being blind and alone and having to deal with today's problems. BESB has been there for him and was able to retrain him to get back to working in a seeing man's society.

Don't take this away from all those people who are now in need of these services and those who will soon need these services. Life is hard for the most normal of people; it is so much worse for those who can no longer function without their sight.

All the people associated with BESB are life savers in their own right; please keep this agency the way it is so that all who need them will know where to find the help they need.

2/28/2011

Sincerely yours,

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Cognata

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