

Virginia Perlman
3 Sanford Road
Manchester, CT 06042
(860) 646-7917 ginip@cox.net

Testimony for Senate Bill #1012: Governor Malloy's Proposed Biennial Budget
Board of Education Services for the Blind (BESB)
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
March 3, 2011

I am writing the members of the Appropriations Committee with my concerns regarding the Governor's proposed budget, specifically the consolidation of BESB's Vocational Rehabilitation division, the Adult Services division and the Business Enterprise Program into the Department of Social Services.

I am totally blind at this stage in my life and receive excellent services from BESB that allow me to live independently and stay productive and active. I am 76 and have benefited from BESB since I was 10 years old. As a child I was able to start school and attend sight conservation classes, graduating from Hill House High School in New Haven. In college BESB provided me with reader services and financial aid. I was able to start my own business, which I ran for almost 30 years, because of BESB. I now receive in-home computer skills training in order to prepare me to start an on-line business. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated staff and expansive services made available to me by BESB.

I understand the need for agency consolidations during the state's fiscal crisis and that the merger should allow for a reduction in administrative costs. It is unfortunate that such a proposal is necessary, but the point I want to make to Committee is that those of us receiving services from BESB want our elected officials to accomplish the goal of reduced cost without the impact of reduced services.

It is critical that those dedicated BESB staff, many of whom are vision impaired or blind themselves, continue to work exclusively with those of us in Connecticut who qualify for services. It is also critical that in-home services continue since the infrastructure and funding necessary to travel to the services is not in consistently in-place.

I know that tough decisions need to be made and I do not envy those of you who have chosen to take on the responsibility of making them. That being said, when making your decisions, please be sure that any administrative changes do not impact service delivery or quality.

Thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of the State of Connecticut. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.