

Rosemarie D. Weed

February 28, 2011

To House Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to you with my concern over the dissolution of the Board of Education Services for the Blind (BESB). As a taxpayer of Connecticut and as an accountant for a non-profit agency in this state, I too am very interested in saving every penny we can save; and I do believe there are lots of pennies to be saved, maybe even within BESB. But closing BESB and dividing it among the Department of Education and Department of Social Services, I believe, will not only NOT save money, but spend more or risk drastically underserving this population of our state.

Years ago, I worked as a para-professional in my town. Part of my duties was to provide Braille materials for a blind student. A couple of years later, a visually impaired student entered our high school, so I prepared materials for this child as well. The equipment I used was on loan from BESB. The training I received was from BESB. Had our small town been required to either outsource this service and/or purchase this equipment, the cost would have been exorbitant at best. The incidence of students with this special need in our town is not significant, but the outlay for equipment to educate just these two children would have been quite costly if BESB didn't help us. That's the beauty of an agency like BESB. We may not need them for years, but they're there when we need them and when our town doesn't need them, rest assured other towns within our state do. They are a gem of a shared resource within our state and they have the expertise and the resources to help us help the visually impaired members of our community get the education and services they need and deserve.

BESB works with the blind and visually impaired from birth to death – no other state agency can take over that task and do it as well. I implore you to reconsider this dissolution. If you proceed with Bill 6380, not only will it cost taxpayers more, but some of our most vulnerable citizens will be lost in the shuffle.

Sincerely,
Rosemarie Weed
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