

Dear Governor Malloy and Members of the Connecticut General Assembly;

I am writing on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut. I am currently the Affiliate President. I am writing to urge that the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB), not be combined or merged with the Departments of Education and Social Services. This consolidation is presently before the State Legislature as SB 387 and SB 1012.

Since the late 1800's, BESB has been providing services to the Blind of Connecticut based upon our unique needs and continues to do so today, due in great part to the present leadership of it's current Executive Director, Brian Sigman. In these days of budgetary limitations, Mr. Sigman has run this agency with effectiveness and compassion, while staying within his given budget.

The blind community listened intently during your campaign for Governor, when you spoke of educational opportunities for the citizens of Connecticut and assumed you meant all the citizenry. By combining the aforementioned agencies, I feel the strides we have made in the past few years will be severely put at risk.

Being blind has unique needs that need unique talents of teachers of the blind to include mobility and Braille. These needs and more cannot be met by instructors who deal with other disability issues. Today, BESB operates efficiently and reports to a Board comprised with learned individuals who represent a broad spectrum of the blind community. I would hate to imagine how much we would be lost in a combined agency as currently proposed. I am especially concerned for the blind children of our State who will suffer if this legislation is moved forward.

As elected President of the National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut, I respectfully urge that these agencies not be combined as it would be a detriment to all the blind people of Connecticut and to the strides made by BESB in recent years.

Respectfully submitted;  
Elizabeth Rival  
President / National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut