

HOPE SPEECH & LANGUAGE CENTER
CHRISTINA FOREMAN PH.D., CCC-SLP

March 3, 2011

Dear Appropriations Committee Members, and all concerned,

I am an educator, businesswoman, and I am the parent of a blind child. I am writing to express my strong opinion regarding the matter of a possible consolidation of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind into the Department of Education and the Department of Social Services (HB6380 and SB1012). As an individual who has ties to all of the aforementioned agencies, my opinion on this matter is based upon fact and experience, versus supposition and hearsay.

I know for a fact that the Department of Social Services is overwhelmed with their current responsibilities. I know for a fact that there is not currently any type of structure in place that could begin to handle this consolidation in terms of manpower, finances, resources or expertise. I understand that the plan would most likely involve a systematic phase-in whereby members of BESB would be included in order to handle the needs of the population they serve, however, I can tell you, this would not be sufficient.

The resources that BESB provides, and the current structure of BESB are unique. Under the current system, families of individuals with visual impairment, as well as the individuals themselves, are able to *quickly* and *inexpensively* access tools that are essential to learning and life. This society is not at all structured for the needs of individuals with visual impairments – there are extremely few Braille signs, extremely few auditory



signal lights, etc. Individuals with VI need a great deal of support from infancy through death so that they can participate in this society – not simply collect a Disability check – but participate. If you remove the strong and necessary system of support that BESB provides, I guarantee you that the money you seek to save in upfront costs will be lost many times over in increased Disability payouts, Social Security payouts, due-process and other legal battles in the Department of Education, and – if anyone cares beyond the dollar sign – you will have a new generation of individuals who are ill-prepared for life.

There is absolutely no way that a consolidation of these departments can result in the same quality of care and instruction that BESB currently provides. There is no way. What would happen to all of the resources that are readily available to us? Would my child still have almost unlimited access to Braille books? Would she still receive consistent services from an education teacher? Did you know that Special Education teachers are not taught, to any functional degree, how to adapt their curriculum for the needs of a visually impaired student? Who will teach my daughter Braille? Would I have to pay for these things if there's a consolidation? Besides cutting down on building space, and on staff (to the detriment of the population served) what would be the benefit of this consolidation? I do not see any benefit whatsoever. I strenuously object to this move.

Thank you so much for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Christina G. Foreman, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

