

To Whom it may Concern,

I am writing this in response to the vote on Bill #6380. I am against the dismantling of BESB and the students being put under the care of the State Board of Education and Department of Social Services.

My son William Goodrich, 6, has been under the excellent care of BESB since he was an infant. My son was born with Occultaneous Albinism and suffers from Low Vision and in effect is legally blind. At the time of his birth I knew nothing about his affliction. I was lucky enough to have a staff member from BESB to explain the ramifications on his vision and later the effect it will have on his life. They have been there for our family and our child every step of the way. I don't know where we would be without their guidance. Our pediatrician was not educated on his condition, but BESB was. They were able to point us in the direction we needed to go.

As I watched our worker, Gail Johnson work with my son through his milestones, I thought the hard part was almost over as he was about to start school. I could not have imagined the challenges he would have to face that were yet to come. Luckily, Laura Druva, my son's school age worker, has been there every step to suggest technology and occupational therapy within our own school to make his transition a smooth one. None of the teachers in my son's school had ever worked with a child with Albinism and therefore had no idea the adaptations he would require. I know that my son would not be as well off as he is without the help of BESB.

Dismantling the system that works so well for our children now would be a travesty to say the least. It is my understanding the state is trying to save \$288,000 by handing over roughly 1,000 children under the care of BESB to the care of the State Board of Education. I find it hard to believe that my child is not worth \$288 to keep them under the care of BESB, and agency that has proven itself worthy for over 100 years. BESB is not only responsible for service to our children, but some adults as well. It is my understanding that these cases will be turned over to the already over loaded caseworkers in the Department of Social Services. I can not understand how splitting the resources, supplies, and technology between two agencies that are not qualified to deal with the blind will save money. BESB pools its resources now between adults and children and if they are split the state would then be responsible for purchasing enough equipment for both age groups. How would purchasing equipment the state already owns save money?

The Board of Education and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides a valuable service to our community and for our State. Educators, Parents, and Students alike are in agreement that it is a service that is greatly needed. The professionalism, integrity, and pure knowledge that we have experienced by the men and women of BESB should count for something.

Please Vote No on Bill #6380 and Save BESB and insure our children the best future possible.

Sincerely,
Andrea & Matthew Goodrich