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Re: HB1012

Needless to say I have many mixed feelings regarding the consolidation of the State Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) with the Department of Social Services.

I have been a client of BESB since infancy; I am now 64 years old. When my parents were told I was blind, they requested services. Counsellors provided information and tools to guide me through my childhood.

I received my education from the Oak Hill School for the Blind with continuing support from BESB. Fast forwarding to the present, I would not own and operate my Braille transcription business without the agency. I was equipped with an embosser, a binding machine and software to efficiently perform tasks involving the production of Braille. Specially trained technologists and rehabilitation counselors provided guidance to get me started with my business and follow up needs.

If job seeking and college bound blind adults must work with the Department of Social Services, (DSS) they will get lost in the system due to the lack of training in the specialized blindness related technology fields. I have spoken to employees of DSS who know nothing about our special needs.

I agree with the fact that we all need to do our share to balance the budget but consolidating BESB with other agencies will result in a great deal of expense for training of others, not a good thing. I urge you to keep the special interest agencies in tact to better serve their clients which, in the long run, will be more cost effective.

Thank you.