

Betty Woodward
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RE: Testimony SB1012

Good morning Committee Members,

My name is Betty Woodward. I am legally blind, and I can't believe we're here again and for the same reason – to appeal to you to allow the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) to remain a separate agency. You have heard, or will hear, some of the situations we face when we lose our vision (slowly, all at once, or never have it in the first place). We read large print, Braille (slate and stylus) and in many cases, have a reader. We learn to travel with a long white cane or a dog guide in order to travel independently. Because BESB has made available job opportunities under the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) many blind individuals operate their own food service facility.

We have all be here before – three times I believe. Many of you who still walk the halls of this building agreed with us – a separate agency with a dedicated agency director and staff (and BESB has both) would do a better job than breaking up this agency into two directions would do.

The person who represents the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services is a non-voting member of the Board of Directors of BESB. To my knowledge, he has attended one meeting in the six years that I have sat on this Board. It troubles me that Governor Malloy has wished to place part of a well-run agency under an agency whose head appears to have little interest in the lives of Connecticut's blind population.

Please listen to us. We want to learn, grow, work and live normal, productive lives. The best way for this to happen is by keeping the Board of Education and Services for the Blind a separate, stand-alone agency. Thank you.

Betty M. Woodward
Board Member, Board of Education and Services for the Blind
Board Member, National Federation of the Blind of CT