

March 13, 2011

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Jennifer Cecarelli, and I am a parent of a six year old boy who attends first grade at Ridge Road School in North Haven, CT, and receives services from BESB, the Connecticut State Board of Education Services for the Blind. Andrew's BESB teacher (a certified Vision Teacher) meets with his classroom teacher monthly, in order to ensure that he is being educated with full visual access in the least restrictive environment possible. Andy has had Nystagmus since birth, which is a relatively rare visual condition, with which few teachers are familiar. BESB teachers are not only aware of Nystagmus; they know how to modify classroom environments so students like my son can realize their full potential. Andrew's BESB teacher, Cheryl Brown, writes reports of her sessions with Andrew, and these reports are consistently filled with suggestions for us when we work him at home, for his teacher, when she works with him at school, and for areas we may wish to explore further with our pediatric ophthalmologist. We recently returned from several appointments with an ophthalmologist in San Diego, CA; Ms. Brown's detailed reports were invaluable as we communicated with this doctor.

Governor Malloy's Bill No. 1012, LCO No. is recommending that both BESB and the Commission of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired have their functions transferred to the Departments of Education and Social Services. As an educator myself, I know what a devastating impact this will have on the quality and frequency of the services my son, and students like him, will receive. I am fully aware that if the already overburdened SDE is asked to take over the myriad of responsibilities necessary to run a strong and effective organization such as BESB, then it will fall into the same dysfunction and ineffectiveness that has already plagued many of our State's departments. I am respectfully requesting that this recommendation be removed from consideration quickly, as it is likely that education for students with sensory impairments will be irretrievably harmed.

As an educator and as a parent, I have been consistently impressed with BESB's accessibility to families, and with the high quality of their services. To this point, they have been active, responsive, and effective. They truly exemplify the standards to which all State agencies should strive. We need to keep in mind that these are State *services*; created to serve the neediest among State residents. By asking an already stretched department to assume further responsibility, a responsibility with which they are neither familiar nor properly qualified, those who need it most will be harmed- not served.

I hope my family, and the families of State residents with children learning with low vision and low hearing can count on vocal opposition to this bill. Without it, their learning potential will

irretrievable harmed. Please contact me at any time, as I would welcome the opportunity to speak with anyone on this issue.

Sincerely,

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