

I am writing to implore you not to eliminate the Board of Education Services for the Blind as it currently exists. My six year old son was born with a genetic disorder called Achromatopsia. This is a form of cone dystrophy that makes him legally blind. He will never drive a car or play sports like other kids. He has been a joy and a blessing for our family, but also tough to figure out. One minute he appears to see what is in front of him and can maneuver safely around it, the next he is running into a parked car (literally). Part of the issue with achromatopsia is a severe light sensitivity. Without the help of the teachers at BESB in preschool and also now in Kindergarten, my son would be a different child. He is able to safely move around and be in a normal classroom because BESB sent us knowledgeable teachers who work together and give him the needed skills and equipment, like a closed circuit television. I don't know where we would be without them. Lisa Pruner, a BESB teacher was the first to provide us with knowledge. She educated my husband and I about our son and his limitations and abilities in ways that no doctor has ever done. She encouraged us with her specific experience and background and gave him as 'normal' of a childhood that a person with his condition can have.

Please keep BESB as an independent agency. The State Department of education does not have experience with the specific needs of people like my son. This experience is vital to their success in school and in life! He would have fallen through the cracks because nobody had experience with visually impaired students before he came to his school. BESB provided us and his teachers with training so we could understand (as much as it is possible) what it is like to be Kenny. There are days where his sight is ok and others where it diminishes to almost nothing. That much variation is tough to explain and even tougher to understand; without experienced assistance. BESB provides seamless collaboration and cooperation across all disciplines that ensure success and productive lives for those who are blind. I understand that in these tough economic times we must look for ways to make cuts and 'do more with less'. The people that would be affected by dividing BESB have already had to do more with less. They are operating in a world that is dark and often scary. BESB is the light that offers them the chance to adapt to our sighted world and be productive!!!! Thank you for your consideration. I can be reached at the below number. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Megan Backes
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