

TESTIMONY OF RANDA UTTER

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

March 15, 2011

S.B. No. 1012 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS FROM
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND THE
COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRED TO THE
DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Dear Distinguished Co-Chairmen, Ranking Members and Members of the Human
Services committee:

Thank you for allowing me and other members of the blind community to testify in
opposition to SB 1012 and the Governor's proposal to dismantle the Board of Education
and Services for the Blind and transfer it's functions to the Department of Education and
Department of Social Services.

I am a Legislative Aide to State Senator Len Fasano here in the CT Legislature's Senate
Republican Office. I lost my sight over seven years ago while working here due to a
benign brain tumor and the surgery to remove it. I can not say enough about how much
BESB helped me retain my job skills through its Vocational Rehabilitation Program and
taught me basic living skills through its Adult Services Program. Who knew that there is
computer technology software that reads everything out loud! BESB trainers just needed
to teach me how to use the computer through keyboard commands rather than a mouse.
It's not easy but it works and I have been able to stay a productive member of society.

This is an agency which serves the public with vision disabilities through direct services.
Their staff is small and their budget modest, however, the agency is able to reach out to
both young and older citizens with positive outcomes.

My experience with assisting constituents receiving benefits and/or services from DSS
makes me fearful of this proposed merge outlined in SB 1012. Such a large Department
as DSS with heavy caseloads and paperwork would hinder services to the blind.

I respectfully ask the Committee not to approve SB 1012. Please leave the Board of
Education and Services for the blind as an autonomous state agency.

Thank you for your consideration.