

Greetings:

I am writing this testimony to support my belief that Board of Education and Services for the Blind should not be consolidated into Social Services. I believe that services to their clients would be fractured and their clients would get lost in the shuffle.

I am totally blind and my three girls are legally blind. For many years BESB has provided services for us. In 1966 my rehab counselor helped me to acquire a transcription job at the State Welfare department which I held until 1973 when I became a mom and homemaker.

The agency provided the following services to my three girls:

Early intervention in the home and early intervention at centers for children to develop gross motor skills, fine motor skills and encourage them to interact with other children socially

Opportunities to attend nursery school to prepare them educationally and emotionally for public school

Services in public school such as:

Provision of large print books

Provision of teachers' aids to help them in the classroom

Provision of consultants to make sure that attending public school was a positive experience

Provision of low vision checkups

Provision of low vision equipment

Provision of mobility instruction to encourage independence

Then on a college level, the agency provided payment for books and education.

In 2002 when I wanted to return to work, the agency provided me with the opportunity to attend the National Statler Center for Careers in Hospitality Service, a job training program for the blind and visually impaired, in Buffalo, New York, from which I successfully graduated.

The agency also provided mobility instruction for myself.

In 2007, I acquired a job at Vision Dynamics, a store which sells technology for the blind and visually impaired. For the past three years, the agency from time to time has provided me with the necessary computer training in order to do various job related tasks. I held the job for three years; but unfortunately, I was laid off this past December not due to my job performance, but rather due to the fact that blindness products weren't selling very well at that time.

Now that I am not working, my case is opened again with BESB and my counselor, John Farrington, is very dedicated to helping me to once again find work by putting me in touch with job developers. The commitment and dedication of the people working at this agency gives me and other blind and visually

impaired clients the hope for a brighter future. Therefore, it's my hope that BESB will remain an independent agency and not be consolidated into Social Services. I can't thank BESB enough for all of the services which this agency has provided for me and my family.

Two of my daughters are gainfully employed as teachers: one working at Waterbury Hospital's child care center while the other one is a high school English teacher. My third daughter does child care in her home.

In order for blind and visually impaired people to live independent lives, receive

The education and/or training to become employable and to become gainfully employed, I suggest very strongly that BESB remain an independent agency. Should this agency be consolidated into Social Services, you may see more blind and visually impaired people receiving government assistance because they will not be given the required services to help them to become independent. Thank you for your consideration and serious attention in this matter.

Submitted by:

Nancy Hays