

TESTIMONY - BESB

Let me first begin by saying thank you to all the members of the Human Services Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the State Agency BESB. By way of introduction, my name is Teresa Harrington from Easton and I am here to encourage you to vote against Senate Bill #1012.

I can't imagine all the hours of hard work and decisions that lie ahead for each of you but if you can close your eyes during my three minutes, you will experience the loss of one of our greatest gifts...our vision.

I am here today, the very proud mother of a beautiful 14-year-old girl that was born blind. When we heard the word "blind" we were devastated and afraid. The hospital social worker reassured us that BESB would come to our home as a resource.

This is where our story begins with this very fine organization. It is a team of very dedicated, skilled, and compassionate employees. The team provides services from infants to our aging population sharing resources and collaboration of best practices for the blind and low vision citizens of our State.

Since birth our daughter Carolyn and our family has been able to count on BESB... our school district has counted on BESB to provide all direct Braille instruction, orientation & mobility, vocational training, and technology support. Without them, Carolyn would not be the honor student she is today. Everyone involved in her program has attended countless workshops on teaching Carolyn life skills, or appropriate and meaningful ways to include her in the classroom, art or gym. As parents, we had opportunities to meet other families and discuss the strategies that would help us navigate choices, while raising a child with this very low incidence disability....

Through BESB she has developed great self-esteem and pride in her work. As she begins her transition into adulthood she deserves to have the consistency of BESB under one roof to help her. Research has shown that people who have visual impairments and blindness need to be explicitly taught skills, and need constant reinforcement by trained individuals. The consistency and collaboration under one director and central location that BESB provides helps all people overcome their disability and achieve greatness.

She and all people with blindness should be able to count on one central voice to meet their needs. BESB is a family, Carolyn's extended family. Please don't compromise that.

In closing, the great Helen Keller once said,

The best and most beautiful things in life cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart".... Let her words inspire you to PLEASE, keep BESB together. . Thank you.