

Testimony 3/10/15

Senate Bill #1061

Chairmen: Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Albis; and Members of the Environment Committee

I am testifying in opposition to Section 6 of Senate Bill 1061. Currently, the Department of Rehabilitation Services has first right of refusal whenever the State of CT or a municipality grants permits to vendors to operate a food facility, vending machine or other similar stands in any given location. The new language exempts the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection from these requirements with respect to any State Park or forest under the Department's control. Currently there are 3 blind vendors who operate businesses in these locations through the Business Enterprise Unit of the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind. This change will mean that these three blind vendors will no longer have a job.

The number of blind individuals who are unemployed or underemployed is very great. At a time when jobs should be one of the greatest concerns for the State of CT, why would we go ahead with a plan which will not only eliminate the jobs of 3 disabled operators but put an end to any future blind operators in State Parks? The DEEP would be the only State Agency with this exception. While the bill also calls for the DEEP to remit to DORS-BESB a percentage of the park concessions, the point of the current law is to give blind people a career and a job. That is what rehabilitation is all about.

As a parent of 2 adult children with disabilities, I know how important having a job is to the health and welfare of these individuals. These provisions have existed for many years. Two years ago this same change was proposed and was rejected. I urge you to reject this change once again.

Barbara Cloonan

Parent Advocate

Chairperson: Deaf/Blind Advisory Committee

Past Chair: State Rehabilitation Council DORS-BESB

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