December 8, 2021

Dear Amy,

The National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut is deeply concerned that the “New State Plan” is solely concentrating on Vocational Rehabilitation according to Mary Burgard at BESB. We find this highly unacceptable. There are blind seniors and children under the age of eight that are not receiving services and this policy needs to change. Just because a blind senior is not seeking employment does not mean they do not want to be active, functioning members of society. Many people become blind later in life. They have been used to using computers as a part of their lifestyle. Suddenly after loosing their sight there are no services to train them to use a computer while blind? That is outrages. Jolene Nemeth has been with BESB for years. She is an awful instructor as many of us can testify too. She comes to a home and never lets the student use the computer keyboard. She uses it and explains what to do to the student. The fact that Jolene is still working for BESB and is the only instructor is shameful.

This what we would like to see discussed as part of the Plan tomorrow.

1. The new Director of BESB, if there is to be one should be someone well versed in blind issues. They should only work with the blind. We do not want our services getting smaller and getting mixed in with other disabilities.
2. Adult services needs to be expanded to include best practices from other states. Help on how to implement these ideas can be received from any NFB training center or anyone from the NFB national office. These are some of the practices we would like to see applied.

\*Braille

\*Cane Travel

\*Technology

\*Cooking

\*Cleaning

\*Bill Paying

\*Outings

3. Services for children starting from birth. There is so much they need to learn before the age of eight.

 \*Once a week

4. Stop putting persons with multiple disabilities before people who are blind.

We continually hear there is no money for the programs mentioned above. However, an idea was emailed to you for training at your facility that would be very cost effective. No response was given. Seniors do not have to go to expensive training centers, they can get cooking, cleaning and bill pay instruction in their homes. Braille and technology can be taught at DORS and cane travel is as what it has always been. Needed more frequently.

I hope you take our issues seriously and think long and hard about them. Other states offer these programs, there is no reason Connecticut should not.

Sincerely,

Maryanne Melley

President

National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut