

Hampton Susan

Subject: FW: Education Committee Members: HB 2755

From: Therese Gorman-Steward [theresemarie.gs@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, March 08, 2013 12:29 AM

To: Therese Gorman-Steward

Cc: Rep Gelser

Subject: Education Committee Members: HB 2755

Dear Representative,

I am glad to see that an advisory committee is being proposed, to oversee implementation of the BVI Fund.

I heard that the Oregon branch of NFB (National Federation of the Blind) opposes HB 2755 for two reasons:

- 1) It doesn't think the advisory board should include parents, supposedly because they think that a parent only cares about his/her own child.
- 2) It doesn't think that BVI (Blind/Visually Impaired) money should be spent on vision screening in schools because the majority of screenees would not be found to be visually impaired.

About the first argument: I find it outlandish and astonishing that anyone would assert such a thing and hopefully I was mis-informed. But, in the event that this information is true, I would like you to consider an opposing perspective. Not only do I disagree, but I feel it would be an extremely prejudiced and hostile policy to leave major stakeholders (which parents of the BVI are) out of the proposed advisory board. On the contrary, any advisory board that had less than 2 parents on a board of 8, would be a sham and an affront to blind students and their parents. Such a view goes against the very purpose and intent of an advisory board. Although some professionals don't like to think so, parents often have the best sense of what is working and what is not working, when it comes to their special needs child's education. A board without 2 parents on it would be one with flagrant disregard of people who may be the BVI students' best advocates.

I am the parent of a young man who is blind and has autism. For his entire life, I have advocated for disabled students and created programs that serve them. The vast majority of these activities were not ones from which my son stood to benefit. Only a fool would believe that it is an efficient and effective use of time to volunteer on an advisory board in order to get what one needs for one's child. That's just not how it works.

About the second argument: It's hard to understand why NFB would object to the expenditure of a relatively small percentage of funds to provide vision screening in the public schools. It is quite well known and well established that the earlier the intervention, when a disability impacts learning, the better. I heard that their logic went like this: since only a small portion of students would indeed be identified as having a vision impairment, the money would be wasted by screening students who are not visually impaired. This makes no sense. Using that logic, we should not do routine mammograms or any other screenings whose findings show that most participants do not have the condition for which the screening is being conducted. I wonder whether they would object to Child Find and hearing screenings too.

I have more to say about the proposed measure, but I will save that for testimony in the hearing. I do not think I will be allowed the time necessary to address this issue in the hearing, and so I wanted to send you my thoughts about this separately.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Therese Gorman-Steward