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By Fax (2524 5695)
28 February 2007

Mr Rafael HUI, GBS, JP
Chief Secretary for Administration
5/F, Main Wing
Central Government Offices
Lower Albert Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr HUI,

**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

On behalf of the Subcommittee, I relay to you the grave concern of members about the non-provision of residential respite service for persons with disabilities aged under 15.

The Subcommittee has been following up on the boarding service for students with special educational needs since its formation in January 2005. During the past two years, the Subcommittee had discussed at several meetings the present gap on residential respite service for persons with disabilities under aged 15. At present, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is responsible for planning boarding service for students with special educational needs. The residential respite service for people with disabilities falls within the purview of the Social Welfare Department (SWD).

Members note with concern that the respite service provided by SWD targets at persons with disabilities aged 15 and above. For persons with disabilities under aged 15, neither EMB nor SWD provides residential respite service. EMB claims that respite service is not its core service, whereas SWD considers that matters relating to the boarding need of school-aged children with disabilities should be the responsibility of EMB.

Although EMB raises no objection to the provision of respite service by special schools on a self-financing mode to meet the temporary or contingency needs of students if the special schools have unfilled boarding capacity, members consider such a passive and uncoordinated approach far from satisfactory. Members are gravely concerned about the lack of action on the part of the Administration to address the problem. They have asked me, as Chairman of the Subcommittee, to bring up the matter to you so that proactive action could be taken expeditiously to fill the long-existing gap on residential respite service for persons with disabilities under aged 15.

The Subcommittee appreciates that the Administration may need time for policy formulation and should be grateful for your response in three months' time.

I have separately written to the Secretary for Education and Manpower and the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food on the matter.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung)
Chairman to Subcommittee

Encl.