

DARLENE
TRUPP
7357

TO: General Assembly Education C Date: 3-12-07 Bill Number: 7357

RE: Raised House Bill No. 7357, AN ACT CONCERNING
PARAEDUCATORS

DATE: March 12, 2007

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education
Committee:

My name is Darlene Trupp, and I work as a public school paraprofessional at Dwight Elementary School in the Fairfield school district. I have been a para for 19 years. I work in both Kindergarten and first grade assisting the teachers with writing and reading. During writing, I sit with the students and help them with their letter/sound recognition and give extra support to those students that the teacher recommends extra attention that day. At any given time I can be called upon to cover a classroom so teachers can have grade level meetings or PPT's. My other duties each and everyday include AM/PM bus duty and lunch/recess, where I facilitate socialization, intervene in conflicts, along with tying shoes and opening milk cartons.

I want to thank the General Assembly for commissioning last year's study of the role of paraprofessionals in our public schools. However, I respectfully urge you to **oppose** raised House Bill 7357, AN ACT CONCERNING PARAEDUCATORS. I do not believe that another layer of credentialing on top of the federal requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act that does not offer real job security for paraprofessionals will resolve the crisis in our state's public schools.

I believe such a mandate will only drive down the number of paraprofessionals in our schools, which already face short-staffing and unfilled vacancies. I believe that what our schools really need are attainable solutions to the many challenges we face on the job, such as the lack of compensation for education and low wages.

I believe school paraprofessionals are not adequately compensated for the tremendous impact we make in the lives of the students we work with each and every day.

Working together with thousands of school paraprofessionals in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, we have developed a simple solution that will make a difference in enhancing our profession, such as establishing a LIVING WAGE standard, creating access to affordable health care, and establishing pension plans. Credentialing is only effective when combined with creation of a career ladder for paras, along with compensated skills development and in-service training for paras working with students with disabilities.

I firmly believe that the real solution to closing the achievement gap for our students and recruiting and retaining the paraprofessionals our schools depend on is to support local districts so they can increase our wages and provide us access to health care. Therefore I ask you **OPPOSE** HB 7357.

The children of your state are our future leaders. Please don't miss an opportunity to have a greater impact on public education by investing in these valued workers.

Thank you for the opportunity for paraprofessionals to be heard.

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