

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker: *MARY Aughenbaugh*

Date: *3-12-07* Bill Number: *7357*

TO: General Assembly Education Committee

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 Mary Aughenbaugh and I work as a public school paraprofessional at Borough Elementary School in the Stafford Springs district. Among many duties and responsibilities, I am responsible for the operations of both the library and computer lab each and every day.

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Name of school

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 7857, 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 reimbursement for courses taken affiliated to our positions. Certified staff qualify for reimbursement for courses taken while working to keep them up to date with State requirements. CEU's are attainable through common curriculum days to allow the teachers the needed credits to stay in their jobs.

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. In my own personal situation, I have worked for the Stafford Board of Education for 24 years and still do not make \$15.00 an hour. This has been a hardship for my family, raising four

children of my own, through the years. Were it not for access to healthcare I would not have been able to stay in this position, as much as I love the work I do.

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 living wage standards.

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 7857.

Thank-you for your time and for hearing my voice on this critical matter.

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List specific enhancement solutions, such as establishing living wage standards, creating access to affordable health care, creating a career ladder for paras, providing compensated skills-development, and offering in-service training for paras working with students with disabilities.