

Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:
SHANNON
WAGNER
Date: 3-12-07 Bill Number: 7857

TO: General Assembly Education
RE: Raised House Bill No. 7357, A
PARAEDUCATORS
DATE: March 12, 2007

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

My name is Shannon Wagner, and I work as a public school paraprofessional at Tolland Middle School in the Tolland public school district. Among many duties and responsibilities, I teach students one to one in all subjects, offer guidance to special needs students and also give direct basic care to severely disabled students each and every day.

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 better and safer working conditions, higher pay for specialized qualifications to increase morale and job satisfaction, and educational and enrichment opportunities.

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 am required to be a teacher, an advisor, a mentor and a nurse. Although, my paycheck does not reflect these job duties that I perform 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 higher wages, better benefits and incentives to keep employees who are dedicated to this important position.

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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