

**Testimony of**

**Jackeline Aviles, Paraprofessional**

**Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals, AFT Local 2221**

**S.B. 300 An Act Concerning Family Medical Leave Benefits for Certain  
Municipal Employees**

**Labor and Public Employees Committee  
March 4, 2010**

Good afternoon members of the Labor Committee.

I am Jackeline Aviles, Second Vice President of The Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals. I have also been a bilingual paraprofessional at the Nursing Academy at Hartford High School for a period of 11 years. I would like today to speak to you about S.B. 300 which would enable paraprofessionals to be eligible for Family and Medical Leave.

Serving as a paraprofessional for all these years, I have seen how more and more the district is depending on paraprofessionals to assist teachers on implementations of new curriculums and on behavioral tactics. Working with medically fragile students, special education students and students with behavioral disorders is quite a challenge within itself. Paraprofessionals are the least paid in the school system yet we go beyond our roles. We have done it all; educators, caregivers, nurses, parent liaison and even social workers, not only to our students but also to parents.

I am in favor of extending Family and Medical Leave because some paraprofessionals have lost their jobs due to terminal illnesses, such as cancer, because they have exhausted their own sick time. Also, paraprofessionals sometimes need to take care of elderly parents or children with chronic illnesses. Because we earn so much less than other school personnel, we cannot afford to take them into nursing or convalescent homes.

Paraprofessionals are productive workers in the school community and give a lot of themselves to students and their families, but we also need to take care of ourselves and our own families. Enacting S.B. 300 will give us peace of mind that we could all benefit from.

Thank you for your time and this opportunity. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.