

Patricia Rauchle, Paraprofessional

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East Hartford, Connecticut

HB 5465 An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees

Dear Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and Members of the Labor Committee,

I am writing to you to urge you to help myself and fellow paraprofessionals qualify for F.M.L.A. As the law is now written, we do not qualify for F.M.L.A. because of the amount of work hours needed, 1250.

I have had many setbacks in the past few years, starting in 2000. I have had to care for sick relatives, mourn the deaths of my sister, mother, son, and husband - all while I battled cancer (that came with 33 radiation treatments) and suffered a heart attack. Most recently, I had eye surgery and, what I thought was, a virus. It turned out to be an irregular heartbeat. Thus, I had a pacemaker put in my heart this past January.

I am recuperating and feeling anxious because I am going to run out of sick time again. My union has told me they will get donated sick time from my colleagues for me. Also, the union did negotiate language in our current contract that allows me 12 weeks after I have depleted my sick days, before the administration can charge me for my benefits. Still I feel the same anxiety that my job or benefits are in jeopardy and it won't subside until I have it in writing that the Board of Education has approved the "sick bank" my union is attempting to collect.

Before the new language was negotiated into our contract, I suffered my first heart attack. I was told I was running out of sick days and would have to pay 75% of my medical benefits. I was financially unable to do this without any income coming in, so I returned to work **against** my doctor's orders. Losing family members and becoming sick is hard enough without having to worry about paying additional for my medical benefits.

I hope you can alleviate this stress for all paras in Connecticut. Although hard working and invaluable to our schools, especially with our current education budget, paras are needed more and more. The bullying the administration is allowed to do with current F.M.L.A. law's language needs to be stopped. Please help us. Thank you for considering to help the paras out.

With much respect,

Pat Rauchle, Paraprofessional

East Hartford Public Schools