

Testimony

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H.B. 5465 An Act Concerning Family Medical Leave Benefits for

Certain Municipal Employees

Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 1, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Theresa Staranchak and I am the President of the New Britain Federation of Paraprofessionals. I am a 1:1 Special Education Para, working with a student who has Autism, and is included everyday in a regular education classroom. My role is to assist the teacher and implement whatever is modified so that my student can be successful in this type of setting. As a professional employee, I maintain a positive and focused environment for my student so that he will ultimately have less stress and a well balanced daily schedule.

I am here today representing all 250 paraprofessionals that work in the district of New Britain and who on a daily basis work hard, are dedicated, and most of all, are resourceful individuals that are productive people not only in the district but the community as well. Over the past several years our district depends and relies on us more and more. Actually, they are getting a great bang for their buck!

This brings me to the reason why I feel very strongly about HB 5465. We cannot continue to live everyday with the stress and anxiety of whether or not we will have a job if we become stricken with an illness beyond our control. Because we are full-time, 10-month, hourly employees, paraprofessionals do not currently qualify for FMLA. That is just not right. If we cannot take care of a family member or ourselves and feel confident that our jobs are not at stake, then how do we really stay healthy? We have paras that have been stricken with serious illnesses, family members who were ill and children that they must take care of. Knowing FMLA could be there for them would give peace of mind and all would then benefit.

I ask you here today to please consider this bill and give it your full support. It is the right thing to do for a very unique and committed group of individuals who presently do not have the benefit of FMLA. Thank you for your time and for listening. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.