

Testimony of Dawn M. Repoli, Colchester Paraprofessional

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

S.B. 150 AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN
- MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. This letter is both a testimony and a heartfelt request. Neither have any negative implications on the wonderful Colchester school district, Board of Education or school, JJIS, that I am employed. I have worked here for eight years and have utmost respect for and gratitude toward the entire district. I implore you to consider decreasing the number of work hours that is currently in place for eligibility of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

There have been two situations in my life where not having the Family Medical Leave Act in place for paraprofessionals would have drastically affected my immediate and extended family. During the following trials, I was either a one on one special education paraprofessional or a special education resource paraprofessional. In 2007, my mom had a valve replacement and actually died on the table three times. We were told not to expect her to survive. Miraculously, she came out of the surgery into ICU in a coma, touch and go for seven days. My brother, sister, father and I never left the hospital, sleeping on the waiting room floor, showering where we could. I did not know what the future held. As understanding as my boss was, I knew that if the situation did not improve and I needed to take extended time off above and beyond personal days that I may lose my job. In 2010, my youngest son, Joseph, was diagnosed with Supraventricular tachycardia. There were many appointments prior to and following the surgery. His heart surgery was at Boston Children's Hospital. There was a great deal of time invested in travel. As you can imagine, the stress and worry was all consuming. I was even more saddened thinking that I may need to take extended time off to care for my son and not have the peace of mind that my job would be there for me when this life trial was over.

Please put yourself in the shoes of a people that are not eligible for FMLA. Please decrease the number of hours of work in order to qualify for the Family Medical Leave Act. The FMLA would provide much needed peace of mind to a group of dedicated, compassionate professionals.

Respectfully,
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