

Testimony of Janet Rivera, Paraprofessional
New Britain Schools

Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 1, 2012

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

I write this letter on behalf of all Paraprofessionals especially those that have loved ones with medical issues and for the ones that have loved ones with medical issues.

Good afternoon Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor Committee. My name is Janet Rivera; I am a Paraprofessional in the New Britain School District. I ask of you today to get this bill passed because we need the FMLA benefit. I feel I am a very dedicated Paraprofessional who give 110% every day for the students I work with that have learning disabilities that such as Autism, ADD, ADHD, developmental delay, emotional problems and etc. I go and give them my undivided attention some days I feel I am their mother, father, teacher, friend, and social worker. I give them the tools they need to learn and grow and I'm there every day even when I'm not feeling well.

On the other hand there are days when I'm not there and worry for them I worry how they will get through the day. Why am I not there? I have a daughter who has mild Autism, sensory integration, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and suffers from anxiety. She may not be feeling well that day or I have to take her for an evaluation, or to see the cardiologist to make sure her arteries are healthy and growing normal. What do I do? Can I afford to miss work and worry about if my absences are going to count against me. My husband has FMLA, he is the only driver in the family and I need him to take us for her appt. I do not drive I get epileptic seizures that prevent me from it. I have to be there for her appointments I am her mother and she needs me. God forbid my husband is unable to be here for us then what. For the past month her anxiety is interfering with school and I'm told she needs to see a Professional. When? Early afternoons once a week. My daughter needs help do I look the other way. Do I not give it to her? I'll do anything for my students. Why not my own? I can lose my job or get a bad evaluation if I have too many absences. Then I can't help her physically, emotionally and financially. Why do I have to chose? I want a peace of mind and a support system that lets me take care of my child.

The FMLA bill will give me that peace of mind. Just to let you know I am not here personally to tell you because I am with my daughter at an appointment as this letter is being read with that Professional she needs. This is my story but there are many more with these worries and pleas that have more severe medical problems than me. I personally know two other Paraprofessionals at my school that have children with Diabetes and other ailing medical problems that keep them from going to work because like me they give their all to the students but they too have to take care of their own. Please take into consideration with serious thought and importance of how we need this bill passed.

Thank You