



**TESTIMONY OF SHELLYE M. DAVIS, CO- PRESIDENT
HARTFORD FEDERATION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS**

HB BILL 6502

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. I am Shellye M. Davis, a paraprofessional in the Hartford School District. I am also a President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals and a representative of the PSRP [Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel] division of the AFT and a member of the national Policy and Planning Committee of the PSRP. I am here today on behalf of AFT Connecticut's PSRP members to address HB 6502 and the necessity of amending Connecticut General Statute 10-155k.

As currently constituted, the Paraprofessional Advisory Council, established in 2007 by Connecticut General Statutes §10-155k, has 21 members, only a few of which are paraprofessionals. An advisory council on paraprofessionals should consist of a majority of paraprofessionals. Who else really knows the issues confronting these front line providers of speech and language services, special educational services, Kindergarten and classroom paraprofessionals? Over the years, the role of paraprofessionals has been changing and developing into one with more specialized knowledge about the needs and education of our

students. In addition to providing an education for these children, we engage in continuing educational studies; we coordinate with teachers and with administrators; we even address our concerns directly to School Superintendents and Boards of Education. But even teachers, who share classroom space with us, often do not fully understand our mission and how we fulfill it. For these reasons, our voice on the Council should be a stronger one. We are not asking that we be the only voice on the Council. We recognize that the insights of teachers and administrators provide valuable perspectives on our work as well. But we should constitute a majority of the members of the Council.

We appreciate your attention to this very important matter. However, as currently drafted, HB 6502 is improperly worded and fails to achieve the intended goal. It would actually decrease paraprofessional representation on the Council by designating one representative from each exclusive bargaining unit for certified employees. Paraprofessionals are not certified and of the two unions who represent certified employees, i.e. teachers, only AFT Connecticut also represents paraprofessionals. There are at least seven unions, including AFT Connecticut, that represent paraprofessionals. Each one of those unions should have a designated representative on the Council. The other members named in the bill are appropriate and should remain. The language in a similar bill, HB 6183, which I have attached to my testimony, reflects the changes I have suggested and would resolve the lack of paraprofessional representation on the Council.

We appreciate that HB 6502 would also allow the Council to address issues in addition to the ongoing professional development needs. By giving paraprofessionals a voice in

recommended staffing policies and other issues that impact them in the workplace, you demonstrate a commitment to their success and the success of our students.

In summation, we urge you to amend HB 6502 to give paraprofessionals a majority voice on the Paraprofessional Advisory Council. We believe that this legislation will make for a more effective Council, and will advance the education of children in Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



General Assembly

Proposed Bill No. 6183

January Session, 2013

LCO No. 2074

Referred to Committee on EDUCATION

Introduced by:

REP. LEMAR, 96th Dist.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

That section 10-155k of the general statutes be amended to (1) include in the membership of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council (A) one paraprofessional appointed by (i) the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut, (ii) the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, Council 15, (iii) Municipal Employees Union Independent, (iv) Connecticut State Employees Association, and (v) United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Local 222, (B) the person most recently awarded Paraprofessional of the Year award, (C) one teacher appointed by the Connecticut Education Association, (D) one teacher appointed by the American Federation of Teachers Connecticut, (E) two representatives from the regional educational service center appointed by the Commissioner of Education, and (F) a school administrator appointed by the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators; and (2) require the council to advise the Commissioner of Education, at least quarterly, of the needs for (A) professional development and training for paraprofessionals, (B) appropriate staffing strategies for paraprofessionals, and (C) other relevant issues relating to paraprofessionals.

Statement of Purpose:

To expand the membership and responsibilities of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council.