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**Program Review and Investigations Committee**  
**September 24, 2014**  
**SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS STAFFING STUDY**

Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

My name is Mary Grabert, I am a para educator in the New Fairfield School District.

As a para educator in an elementary school, I can attest that we provide support for all of the students in the classroom. We collect academic and behavioral data for the teachers. We work with the administration and the staff to provide the students with a safe learning environment. We work hard to meet the needs of our students, but we could be so much more effective if para educators had access to similar professional development that other school professionals receive.

Access to continuing education and professional development would help us learn the best ways to teach students with different learning abilities. When I was assigned to three students in a first grade class, my job was to keep them on task, have them complete an assignment, and monitor their behavior. The teacher told me that all of the students had to produce something to complete their assignments. It was very challenging because each had different learning issues and learning styles. One student would break every pencil that I gave him and act out, another student was extremely shy and had difficulties with reading, and the last student had problems with writing and spelling. Many elementary paraprofessionals experience similar situations everyday assisting in the classroom, and without the necessary training to address the needs of our students we can't serve them nearly as well as we could. We need the proper tools to do the job; we need access to professional development.

Thank you.

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