

**Education Committee
March 11, 2015
House Bill 6968 – Support**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Janette Smith and I am a paraeducator in the town of Mansfield, CT. I have been a paraeducator in my district for 24 years. I submit this testimony in support of H.B. No. 6968 (RAISED) an Act Authorizing the Use of School Paraprofessionals to Serve as Short-Term Substitute Teachers. This legislation would allow school paraeducators to act as a substitute teacher for ten or fewer school days, seemingly with or without a bachelor's degree.

During my 24 years as a paraeducator, I have observed non-degreed peers being pulled from their regular classroom and student responsibilities to "monitor" classrooms while the certified staff attend meetings or other obligations that take them away from their classroom. Non-degreed paraeducators efficiently continue with the classroom instruction that the teacher has initiated, work with students on assignments, without disruption to the instructional day. The amount of time that a paraeducator is requested to monitor a classroom varies from district to district. Whether we call it monitoring, substituting, filling in, or supervising a class, non-certified paraeducators are being requested to perform the exact same duties and responsibilities, while a certified staff is absent from the classroom as degreed paraeducators, but without compensation.

Degreed and non-degreed paraeducators within a school are the most logical choice when looking for competent teacher substitutes. They are familiar with their school environment, the students and the needs and expectations of the staff. As our districts continue to service an increasing number of special needs students, it is particularly important to maintain a constant learning environment. The paraeducator who is already familiar with the student and the classroom is the person most able to achieve this consistency.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for districts to obtain sufficient qualified substitutes teachers. This legislation would provide districts with an additional pool of substitutes who are already working in their respective schools on a daily basis. The paraeducators are experienced in managing the classrooms, knowledgeable of the individual needs of the students and well versed in their educational programs. This bill warrants your support because it is logistically, financially, and educationally in the best interest of our school districts and the students in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and hearing my voice on this critical matter.

Janette Smith
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