

Program Review and Investigations Committee
February 27, 2015
Senate Bill 972 – Support

Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

My name is George Gould, I am a Staff Representative for CSEA SEIU Local 2001. I am assigned to the Para-Educator Council and am here on behalf of the Para-Educator Council which represents approximately 4000 paraprofessionals across the State. I am here today to urge the committee to support Senate Bill 972. We support the efforts of the committee recommendations 2, 8, 10. We also would hope that the committee would go further and we would support legislation to implement recommendations 3, 6 and 7. There are many members that would be here today except for their dedication to their students. It is difficult for our members to get to hearings.

We are particularly interested in expanding the professional development area in recommendation # 8 which would currently require three hours of professional development. One of our members that would have been here today is the President of our bargaining unit in Enfield. As part of our negotiations team, she and fellow member Ginny Smith spearheaded three professional development partial days each year and a very active labor management committee that determines the top needs for para-educator training. This past year the paras received training in OT/PT, they did a collaboration day to ensure that teachers and paras were on the same page regarding individual student programs. Another professional development day was spent on speech; recognizing speech issues in students, etc. These days have been extremely well received by both the Paras and the Administration.

The other area that we would like to see expanded is recommendation number 7. As a chief negotiator for Para-Educator contracts, I have experienced the situation where para-educators are used as substitute teachers or for teacher coverage. Based on my experience with Para-Educators there is very little difference between the two activities. Although para-educators are sometimes taken away from their student responsibilities to provide coverage for regular teachers or perform substitute teacher coverage, there are instances where a paraprofessional can provide certain advantages over substitute teachers. Para-educators know the students better, know the education program for the most part that students are doing. They can provide more consistent instruction because there is no real interaction with a substitute after they leave but a para-educator returns to discuss progress the next day. We would like to see the substitute teacher role tightened so that there is more consistency across the state, but we also think that not allowing all paras to participate

as substitutes when their duties are not negatively impacted by that substitute role, is a missed opportunity to provide better and more consistent educational program to the students our members serve.

Thank You.

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