

SB-66



Stephen Anderson  
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February 16, 2016

## **Labor and Public Employees Committee Senate Bill 66 – Support**

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

My name is David Glidden and I am the Executive Director of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, a labor union that represents approximately 2,500 paraeducators working in school systems throughout our state. I come before you today to testify in support of Senate Bill Number 66, an act extending paid sick leave to school paraprofessionals.

Two years ago our union stopped referring to these workers as "paraprofessionals" and adopted the term "paraeducators", to reflect the fact that today's paras have evolved into education specialists, often handling the most challenging assignments in the classroom. Paraeducators work with children in early childhood programs, students on the autism spectrum, children with developmental disabilities, and even those who are medically fragile.

You've probably experienced or heard of the phenomenon of there being "something going around at school." Whether it's the common cold, a dreaded stomach bug, or even the flu. If you are within the school walls you are going to be exposed to it. Paraeducators, due to the necessity that they work in close proximity to kids, are at greater risk of being infected. Yet, paraeducators remain one of the few groups of school employees left behind by Connecticut's paid sick leave legislation. As such, unless there is a collective bargaining agreement with paid sick leave built in, paraeducators are unable to take a day off to recuperate when needed, unless of course they can afford to take leave without pay. The law as it stands today covers bus drivers, crossing guards, secretaries and administrative assistants, nonrestaurant food servers, and numerous other service workers who work in schools, have contact with children and are paid on an hourly basis. I can only guess that the absence of paraeducators from the list was an oversight as there can be no logical reason for their exclusion.

Please, don't wait to correct this oversight. This is an appropriate correction that can be made simply by adding paraeducators to the list of occupations covered by Connecticut's paid sick leave legislation.

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