

Testimony of  
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AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

Labor and Public Employees Committee Hearing  
February 16, 2016

**SB 66 AN ACT EXTENDING PAID SICK LEAVE TO SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS**

Good afternoon. My name is Mary Russell, and I have been a paraprofessional in the Hartford public schools for over 10 years. I am also the First Vice President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals, of the American Federation of Teachers.

I am here before you to support **SB 66 An Act Extending Paid Sick Leave to Paraprofessionals**. The proposed legislation would place paraprofessionals on the same level for sick pay entitlement as other service workers employed in the schools including school librarians, food workers, janitors and school nurses.

The lack of a provision for paid sick leave for paraprofessionals reflects a serious educational issue facing the State of Connecticut today. The State is required to provide educational services to diverse students, some of whom require specialized, individualized programs. Paraprofessionals are a crucial link in the process, and provide day-to-day services to some of the neediest of our students. Yet, all too often, their importance is overlooked, and they are forgotten. This legislation is an excellent illustration of this point. Paraprofessionals work closely with students and provide support to classroom teachers, yet in 2012, the act included school lunch room workers, librarians, secretaries, janitors...the list goes on. It did not include paraprofessionals.

The omission of paraprofessionals from the 2012 legislation may have been an oversight. It captures an ongoing issue: namely, the lack of recognition of the importance of paraprofessionals in the educational process.

Please support SB66 and give paraprofessional the recognition they deserve by providing sick time on the same bases as other school employees.

Thank you for your time.