

Testimony of
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Labor & Public Employees Committee
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SB 1 & HB 5003

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 1 & HB 5003**. My name is Shellye Davis and I am the President of the Eastern Connecticut Area Labor Federation, President of the Greater Hartford Central Labor Coalition, and Co-President of the Hartford Federation of Paraprofessionals / AFT Local 221. Those are my part time jobs for lack of a better term. My full time job is a ***Paraeducator*** at Moylan Expeditionary Learning Academy here in Hartford.

In 2012, the legislature passed Public Act 12-43 to provide Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) rights to school paraprofessionals who, typically, did not work enough hours each year to be eligible for leave under the federal FMLA. The passing of this bill was a fantastic first step in recognizing the extremely important work that paraprofessionals perform in schools throughout our state. If we were in any other industrialized country in the world, we wouldn't be here discussing this extremely important topic of Paid Family and Medical Leave. While we as paraprofessionals can use the FLMA, it's not realistic to do so. Being on the low end of the pay scale in the education field, we cannot afford take ***unpaid*** time off to take care of sick family member(s), or for the birth or adoption of a new child, or foster care placement or any of the other qualifying events. In the education field, retention of paraprofessionals is paramount to ensuring continuation of a child's overall education and health. I want to applaud the proponents of these bills for moving our great state of Connecticut forward. We are surrounded on all sides with states that provide Paid Family and Medical Leave -- it's now time to level the playing field.

Once again, Thank you.