

November 12, 2008

Fairfield Board of Education
501 Kings Highway East, Suite 210
P.O. Box 320189
Fairfield, Ct 06825

Re: **STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT - Low Wages Will
Drive Away Fairfield's Paraeducators**

Chairwoman Albin and Members of the Board of Education:

My name is Julie Cinnamon, and I am a 23-year resident of Fairfield. I'm a teacher by profession, and a former PTA Officer. I have worked as a paraprofessional in our local school district for 12 years, and currently serve as President of the Fairfield Paraprofessional Association in CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, which represents thousands of paraeducators across Connecticut.

Our schools have changed greatly since my children first enrolled here in Fairfield, and paraprofessionals have become an integral part of the "Teaching Community." The Board of Ed's perception of a paraprofessional, however, has not changed.

We are not parents volunteering to cut-out letters, glue, paste, and wipe children's noses. We are dedicated, trained professionals -- and without us, our community's children would not be thriving in this district. We collaborate with teachers, and often receive specific training so that our community's children receive the optimum learning experience.

The reality is that paraprofessionals in Fairfield are not compensated with a salary that reflects the educational requirements needed to work as a para in this District. We need and deserve additional professional development, training, and the opportunity to earn a "livable wage."

Our earnings are not adequate enough to afford to live and raise our own families in the town we work in. Furthermore, they are not equitable when compared with the salaries of paras working in surrounding cities and towns, including the Bridgeport school district.

We have been told for many years that the system would not work without us. It is time to show us that by raising our wages to reflect our value to Fairfield public schools.

With times as hard as they are, I ask the Board to simply imagine how much harder it is for us. Many of us hold down two jobs. Many of us are being pushed out of a town we love.

I believe you all want the best for the children in Fairfield, and without your support, you will be losing an important component of Fairfield Public Schools.

The truth is that your children need us; and we need you to recognize this fact.

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

Julie Cinnamon

Paraprofessional, Fairfield Public Schools
Chapter 119 President, CSEA/SEIU Local 2001
8 Dawn Street
Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

CC: Margaret Mary Fitzgerald, Assistant Superintendant of Schools