

March 10, 2009

Board of Education
TOWN OF WINDHAM
322 Prospect St.
Windham, CT 06280

Re: Statement on Proposed 2009-10 Budget
"Outsourcing Food Services Puts Kids' Health at Risk"

Chairman Ken Folan & Board Members;

My name is Deborah Dubord and I work as an assistant manager of food services at Windham Middle School. I am also President of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Chapter that represents nearly 30 of the district's cafeteria workers.

I am submitting this statement to urge the Board to Education to withdraw the "RFP" to contract out the services we provide. We believe the Board should not "outsource" the health and nutrition of Windham's children to the lowest bidder.

Our community is in a deep economic crisis. We all understand how important it is to work together to find solutions. But someday, hopefully soon, we will come through this. In the meantime, the Board should not give in to short-term fixes like contracting-out that will do long-term damage to our community.

Let me tell you what I know about private food service companies and what has happened in other districts that have outsourced their schools' nutrition services.

Private companies are in this for profit. Our schools' cafeteria program does not need to make a profit, so we can focus exclusively on providing the best quality, nutritious meals to the kids. The only way private companies can make a profit is to lower workers' wages or do-away with their healthcare, and lower the quality of food they serve.

Don't be fooled by private companies that promise the same level of service. They will reduce workers' wages and access to healthcare to squeeze profits.

In bad times, private companies can find employees that will work for low wages. In good times, when they can no longer find workers who will accept their low wages, they recruit temporary help, often from outside the community. This creates a less stable and less reliable workforce.

Let me be clear; contracting-out the work we do may succeed in taking away our dignity, but you will most definitely have taken away your integrity.

When you take away a private companies' ability to make a profit, they will only lose their ability to make a buck.

As cafeteria workers, we are proud of the high quality food services we provide for the children of our community. We are proud of the relationships we have developed with those kids, and their teachers and other school staff.

We urge you to keep the people who love our schools and our community working. We urge you to live up to the statement that was made by the Board members who came to a meeting with our unions on January 27th when they said they valued the commitment and the hard work of the employees.

We want our children to have the best circumstances to achieve the best education they can. We know you do too. We urge you to reject the shortsightedness of private contracting in our schools and look for long-term solutions that we can work on together.

Deborah Debord

Food Services Assistant Manager, Windham Public Schools
President, Windham Board of Education Cafeteria Workers Chapter, CSEA SEIU Local 2001

CC: First Selectman Jean de Smet
CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Executive Council Members
CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Legislative Action Committee Members
Municipal Division Council Officers & Chapter Presidents

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