

Memo

To: Presidents & Officers of Chapters Representing Paraprofessionals
From: Bill Walkauskas, Paraprofessional Council President
Date: 3/10/2010
Re: Legislative Action to Win Family and Medical Leave for Paras

Dear Chapter President/Officer:

Due to a loophole in federal and state law, paraprofessionals in Connecticut are denied access to the rights and protections of the Family & Medical Leave Act. This is wrong and that's why our Union has made access to family and medical leave for all paraprofessionals a key priority for the 2010 legislative session of the General Assembly.

In February, our Local's Executive Director, joined by our SEIU State Council's legislative liaison, submitted a proposed bill that would amend **Connecticut's Family Medical & Leave Act (FMLA) to allow paraprofessionals to take time off of work when they or a family member is seriously ill or to be at home after the birth of a child without the fear of losing their job.**

Last Thursday, the Labor and Public Employees Committee held the first public hearing on the proposed bill, and our Union's members and staff were there to testify. The statements made at the hearing are enclosed and are also available along with a full report on the hearing at the "Paraprofessionals" page of our Union's website at www.csea-ct.com.

Thanks to the efforts of our Union's members and staff, the bill was passed yesterday by the Labor and Public Employees Committee, and is being sent to the Planning and Development Committee. **We need to mobilize Paraprofessional Council members to contact the Chairs** by phone or email because this Committee is the next step in the process of the bill becoming law.

Everyone's help is needed to pass this bill, so make a call or send an email. Even if you don't live in their districts, urge Rep. Brendan Sharkey and Sen. Eric Coleman to support S.B. 300.

We have to act NOW because the bill must be voted on by next week. The names and telephone numbers for the Committee Chairs are on the reverse side of this memo, along with a brief script members can use for phone calls.

Feel free to contact our Union's Political Director, Danny Medress, at (800) 894-9479, ext. 111 with questions on the bill or to sign-up for the next opportunity to speak to lawmakers about this critical issue at the capitol.

You can also email me at any time on any issues regarding our Paraprofessional Council at billwalk@iname.com.

cc: CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 Executive Council Members
CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 Union Staff Reps
SERC Paraprofessional Advisory Council Union Representatives

WW:dmo
Enclosures

Reaching Legislative Leaders

The Planning and Development Committee is taking up the proposed bill to allow public school paraprofessional to access family and medical leave protections. **Call the Committee Chairs TODAY and tell them to support S.B. 300:**

House Chair – Representative Brendan Sharkey (D-Hamden)

Office – (860) 240-8585

Home – (203) 281-4647

Email – Brendan.Sharkey@cga.ct.gov

Senate Chair – Senator Eric Coleman (D-Hartford/Windsor/Bloomfield)

Office – (860) 240-5302

Home – (860) 243-8118

Email – Eric.Coleman@cga.ct.gov

Sample Message Script

Hello -- my name is _____, and I work as a _____ in the _____ school district/Regional Education Service Center. I am calling to urge your support as Planning and Development Committee Co-Chair to pass **Senate Bill 300, An Act Concerning Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.**

- ★ *Paraprofessionals provide important education and support services to the children most in need.*
- ★ *Because of a technicality in the law, paraprofessionals held to a six-hour school day and a ten-month calendar year are denied access to benefits available to teachers, administrators, and other school employees.*
- ★ *These paraprofessionals do not legally have access to the rights granted under the Family & Medical Leave Act because they do not work the minimum 1,200 total hours per year required by federal law.*

That's why we are urging your support for this bill. It would allow paraprofessionals to take time off of work in case we are injured or affected by an illness that requires a long recovery. It would allow us to care for a sick family member or to be at home after the birth of a child.

The bill would allow paraprofessionals to take this time off without the fear of losing their jobs. It's a simple matter of fairness and equal treatment.

Thank-you for your time and for hearing my voice on this critical matter.

Paraprofessional Council

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