



Testimony of
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Education Committee Hearing
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SB 174 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATORS

HB 5305 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Shellye Davis and I have been a paraprofessional in the Hartford Public Schools for over 25 years. I am also a Jurisdictional Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing nearly 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include more than 15,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses and other school personnel across the state.

I am here before you to support SB 174 An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Professional Development And In-Service Training Requirements For Educators. The proposed legislation would establish a task force to examine (a) how local school districts are implementing training requirements for educators; (b) the content of those training requirements; (c) the amount of time needed to meet those requirements; and (d) what effect this training has on the education of the students. In order to be most effective in your efforts to understand the efficacy of district-delivered professional development, I would encourage you to expressly include the training requirements and standards for paraprofessional professional development.

This Task Force is worth investing the time and effort to achieve the stated goals for a number of reasons. First, as it stands now, there is no uniform method of implementing professional development and in-service training. Each school district is on its own. This may be a good thing or it may be a bad thing. We do not know, because no one has looked before. This legislation would remedy that deficiency. One of the outcomes may be to leave each district to its own devices; or it may be that the Task Force would conclude that for the sake of establishing uniformity of education throughout the state, some minimum standards should be adopted.

Second, the Task Force would determine how and to what extent the training provides added benefit to the students. And, after all, that is what we seek to maximize in this. The students' learning is our ultimate goal.

Third, paraprofessionals are not getting the training that is needed for specialized programs like the Applied Behavioral Analysis program, or "ABA". ABA classrooms require paraprofessionals who have been trained to deal with special behavioral problems. The lack of training has resulted in injuries to a significant number of paraprofessionals in the Hartford School District alone. Over and above the social cost of the injury itself, there are the economic costs of the Workers' Compensation claims, the cost of replacing the paraprofessional, even temporarily, and the diminished education for the children. This is definitely one area where legislation of minimum training standards is a must and that is why we also support HB 5305 An Act Concerning School Paraprofessional Training.

Please support SB 174 and HB 5305 to provide better education for our children and a safer working environment for their educators. Thank you.