

In Support of Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania's Public Schools

WHEREAS, there are more than 1.2 million teacher assistants and other educational support personnel in the nation's educational systems; and

WHEREAS, in Pennsylvania's 500 public school districts, paraprofessionals perform a diverse set of specialized academic and non-academic roles, including educational assistants in special education, classroom assistants, early childhood assistants, Early Head Start lead teachers and assistants, and student services assistants; and

WHEREAS, paraprofessionals contribute to students' academic and social/emotional development by providing group instructional support, one-on-one instruction, implementing educational and behavior plans, providing personal care assistance, monitoring arrival/hallways/recess/lunchtime/dismissal, planning and meeting with all stake holders; and

WHEREAS, federal and state laws have recognized the essential role of classroom paraprofessionals, including the paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities and require rigorous credentials for employment; and

WHEREAS, the impact of state education budget cuts have undermined school district budgets, particularly districts that have higher rates of poverty, and the cuts have districts struggling for ways continue services; and

WHEREAS, various efforts to maintain or tailor supports for schools threaten to supplant rather than supplement the critical roles of paraprofessionals, student services, and other school staff; and

WHEREAS, paraprofessionals often live in the communities that the schools serve, know the families and neighborhoods, and play an essential role in building school-community relationships; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania will advocate for the importance of highly qualified classroom paraprofessionals and other represented paraprofessionals employed in public school districts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania will lobby for state education budgets that acknowledge and support the essential and legally required paraprofessional roles; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania reaffirms its advocacy for the roles of paraprofessionals, and its commitment to collective bargaining as the means to ensure the quality of educational services to public school students in Pennsylvania.