

Acknowledge, Address, and End Violence Against Pennsylvania's Public School Educators

WHEREAS, all educators and other school staff are committed to their students' intellectual, creative and emotional development, and to the health and safety of their students; and

WHEREAS, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, and other classroom teachers and paraprofessionals have anecdotally reported instances of being threatened, screamed at, spat upon, hit, kicked, bitten, and hit with objects; and

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2013) called violence against teachers "A Silent National Crisis"; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that from 2011 to 2012, 20% of public school teachers reported being verbally abused, 10% reported being physically threatened, and 5% reported being physically attacked in schools; and

WHEREAS, in the U.S. there are over 900,000 lost days of work per year due to victimization of teachers (APA, 2016); and

WHEREAS, Oregon paraprofessionals and teachers are national leaders in ending the silence on the issue of violence against school staff through the Oregon State Education Association's (OSEA) "Work Shouldn't Hurt" campaign; and

WHEREAS, the AFT (2016) reported that the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) found in a statewide Pennsylvania education study that special education paraprofessionals, assistants and teachers had the highest rate of work-related assaults and associated injuries; and

WHEREAS, research has reported lower professional performance, lower student outcomes, and harmful emotional and physical effects including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with workplace violence experienced by educators; and

WHEREAS, teacher preparation programs and workplace professional development have not prioritized violence directed at teachers and paraprofessionals; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania will assist affiliates with AFT's efforts in developing local campaigns to assess the prevalence of assaults and related injuries, significantly improve district policy and practice, and educate members on steps to protect themselves and students as well as support injured members; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania will assist affiliates in identifying the best staff training programs designed to support positive teaching and learning environments and which explicitly address violence directed at teachers and paraprofessionals; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that AFT Pennsylvania will advocate directly to the Secretary of Education that the Pennsylvania Department of Education implement statistics collection and reporting on the prevalence of threats and assaults on teachers and paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania's public schools.