

**STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:
Avon Schools' Education Support Staff Seek
Smart Budget Choices in Order to
Serve Our Community's Students**

Chairman Harrison and Members of the Board of Finance:

Good evening, my name is Shirley Moy, and I work as the secretary in the principal's office in Avon Middle School, where I have served for 8 years. I'm also a local taxpayer, and reside at 7 Rexinger Lane here in Avon.

I'm also a member of CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, which represents the educational support staff and paraprofessionals here in Avon Public Schools. My co-workers and I joined the Coalition of Citizens for Avon to be here this evening and speak out **in favor of the Board of Education's proposed budget for the next fiscal year.**

I am speaking on behalf of the secretaries in the schools. I would just like to say that we are paid less than the school secretaries in the surrounding towns as well as the secretaries in the town offices. This is just to correct a comment we heard from an audience member. I would like to ask that everyone listen to others with an open mind because assumptions can be wrong.

We are concerned about the future of Avon's schools. The students we serve deserve nothing less than a quality public education. But the reality is that past cuts to the education budget has already put their future in jeopardy.

We often hear from our schools' parents, teachers, coaches, guidance counselors, and nurses that we are the **"engine that keeps Avon schools running."**

We are no longer the secretaries of yesterday where the majority of the secretarial duties consisted of answering the phones and filing. With the advancement of technology, parents and teachers expect information quickly and accurately. PowerSchool has been a great advancement in allowing parents instant access to their children's grades and progress, but this does not happen by itself. Information must be uploaded and accurate and constantly updated with any changes. This does not happen on its own. Secretaries are on the phone often giving parents detailed instructions on how to use the system and refreshing parents' memories of forgotten passcodes.

Then there are federal and state report data collections such as PSIS better known as No Child Left Behind; Strategic Profile Reports; Immigration Reports; Discipline Reports; attendance records; stringent Special Education regulations; private high school and college applications; student records and transcripts; custody issues and restraining orders; not to mention all the daily tasks that need to be done for our teachers and administrators to help our schools run smoothly.

Secretaries are also the first faces parents and students see every morning. We proudly represent the schools we work at and enjoy working with our colleagues in making our schools the best they can be. Secretaries take great measure in knowing our staff, parents and students and seeing that their questions are answered and needs attended to.

We are the ones at the school parents rush to when their child has not returned home after school. We are the ones who sit with the parents after school hours waiting to hear from the police. We are also the ones that remember when

there are specific situations regarding a child's release or custody issue.

It is our job to be more than paper pushers; we are the gate keepers of our schools.

Despite a dramatic increase in our student population, the number of educational support staff in Avon Public Schools has dropped in recent years. Enrollment is up by 50% with 1,100 more students in our schools than in 1998.

Yet compared to surrounding districts, Avon has been running a with a leaner education support staff. In Farmington, for example, there is 1 support staffer for every 100 students enrolled -- here in Avon, the ratio is 1 for every 120 students.

As enrollment has increased in the past years, the support staff has been cut every year without much mention. We are on the list to be cut yet again and possibly lose 7 or 8 vital staff members. When we once had 33 support staff, we are now down to 27. If we lose another 7 or 8, we will be down to 19 or 20 staff people for the hundreds of staff and thousands of students and parents we serve every day.

That's why Avon's support staff are standing up for the board's proposed budget increase of 6.91%.

It's about ensuring the needed resources so that the students we serve are not denied a quality public education and the parents, teachers and administrators continue to receive the administrative support that is necessary today. The school board's proposed budget will help maintain a strong, healthy engine here in Avon Public Schools.

One of the reasons we are fighting for our jobs and this budget is because Avon students are not just students to us. They are our kids, the kids that we see and help everyday. We want nothing but the best for them.

We love these kids; 6.91% and nothing less, please!

Thank you for your time this evening.