

**Stafford Public Schools
Board of Education
May 24, 2010**

**STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:
Approving Changes that Resolve Our
Contract Dispute Will Save School Resources**

Chairman Fontanella and Members of the Board of Education:

Good Evening. My name is Carol Parker, and I reside at 96 Sunset Ridge Road in Stafford Springs. I also work as an in-school suspension paraprofessional at Stafford Middle School, where I serve several students at any given time that are between the ages of 10 and 13.

I love my job, and I take great pride in the vital role I play in serving students. Good days and bad, in the end I am thankful to be part of these children's lives.

I work with some of the best and brightest of our students, and students who, for whatever reason have academic and behavioral issues.

It's moments like these that drive all of us to keep working as the "engine in Stafford's Schools."

I'm also a member of CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, which represents thousands of non-certified school employees across Connecticut. Our Union's chapter, which I serve as Co-President, represents the secretaries, custodians, paraeducators, cafeteria workers and other support staff who are the "engine that keeps Stafford Schools running."

I'm here on behalf of my co-workers to speak about the opportunity you have to save scarce education resources.

Earlier this month, we voted to approve changes to the agreement we ratified last August. That followed months of effort to prevent a dispute that was in our final agreement -- but which was not negotiated -- from going to the State Board of Labor Relations.

We had always hoped we could reach a mutual agreement to work out the issue directly with the Board of Education, and keep local taxpayers from footing the bill for costly attorney fees for labor board hearings. **We are proud that we reached out to school officials to resolve this dispute, and we look forward to your approval of the changes so we can all move forward.**

In this tough economy, and with uncertainty about next year's budget, it would be a huge waste of school resources to spend them on arbitration hearings. Please approve the changes to our agreement so we can all focus on Stafford's kids, not protracted hearings.

Thank you for your time this evening.