

**Windham Board of Education
Statement on Outsourcing Food Services
"Outsourcing Schools' Food Services Hurts
Workers and the Students they Serve"**

Members of the Board of Education;

Good evening. My name is Maureen Hulse and I am a supervising cafeteria worker in Ridgefield Public Schools. I've come from my home in New Milford, two hours away, to share my experiences with you.

Our members have gone through five changes of companies since our work was originally contracted-out by Ridgefield's school board. Every time that happened, there was a disruption to the quality of service provided to students and, on most occasions, there was a negative impact to our wages and or benefits. Many times, the impact to the children we serve was significant, and new employees' wages and benefits were reduced so much that the companies could not hire or keep good workers.

When you decide to outsource, you are deciding to subject your students and workers to a downward spiral that destroys good jobs and puts food services at risk.

1. Marriott was the first contractor:

Our members lost wages and benefits. Our pension was significantly reduced. Workers hours' were cut.

2. Then, Marriott combined with Sodexo:

There were changes made that disrupted the way services were delivered to students.

3. Then Sodexo became our sole employer:

Again, our members lost access to healthcare benefits.

4. Then Sodexho lost the contract to Whitsons:

This was a complete disaster. People were recruited that were not screened, nor were they fingerprinted. Many people only worked a few days. There was more work piled on those of us who stayed, and promises made by the company were never fulfilled.

5. Then Sodexo became the new employer (again).

We negotiated a new agreement through 2011 after a long, difficult process that took nearly a year. Now, we are being switched again; this time to Chartwells.

The new company has refused to honor our current contract, and scheduled negotiations for late-July. Just like every time the Board has changed contractors before, we worry whether we will still have a job, whether our own children will have health insurance during the transition, and whether it will be continued after a new contract is negotiated.

We have never been able to make up the ground that we lost when our Board of Education first outsourced the cafeteria services. And we also have to worry about what adjustments the children we serve will be subjected to.

We have become pawns in a bad game of chess.

However, my co-workers and I have always had the best interests of our children at heart and it is for that reason that I am here tonight.

I urge you to keep your food services in-house. Private contractors cut corners; plain and simple. Once you make the decision to contract-out, services suffer, food quality suffers, and it's the students and the food service workers that pay the price.

Thank you for your time.