

**Monroe Public Schools
Board of Education
February 17, 2010**

**STATEMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:
Monroe's Paraprofessionals
Seek Fairness and Equity in Healthcare**

Chairman Trump and Members of the Board of Education:

Good evening. My name is Patrice Peterson, and I am the Secretary-Treasurer of CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, the Union that represents the nearly one hundred paraprofessionals in Monroe Public Schools. I am also a Special Education teacher with the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, and for the record I reside in West Hartford.

I come to speak to you tonight for a very simple reason and with a very simple and direct request about a matter of grave concern to our Union's members.

We are aware that the Monroe Board of Education has proposed changes to its health insurance carrier, and we have been informed of the monetary impact for the schools' paras if the change is implemented as proposed.

The change would raise costs for the district by approximately \$1,020.00 per month for each paraprofessional with family coverage. The personal impact on those paras who have had family healthcare coverage would be an increase to their premium share of \$408.00 per month.

Clearly, this is unacceptable to us; and it should be unacceptable to you.

Two years ago, our Union established a Paraprofessional Council for the more than 2,400 paraeducators from thirty-five school districts and regional education service centers that we represent.

One of the primary objectives of the Paraprofessional Council and our Union at-large has been to reduce the rising cost of health insurance to our members and their employers, which would produce a savings to local taxpayers. We are leading the effort to pass legislation that will enable school boards to join the state health plan "pool" and access affordable, quality insurance.

Our Union's attorneys have researched Cigna's proposal, and their opinion is that the proposed changes do exactly the opposite of what our Union has long advocated. That is, it divides the district's workforce into smaller risk pools, which sacrifices your ability to negotiate costs through economies of scale.

I urge you to reconsider implementation of a plan that would likely have the affect of forcing your employees to cancel their health insurance coverage. After all, the schools' paras are some of the lowest-paid employees in this district, and passing a disproportionate share of the burden of healthcare costs onto their backs is simply unfair.

I urge you to commence immediate negotiations with our Union so that Monroe's paraprofessionals are not singled out for unfair treatment under this new plan.

Thank you for your time, and for hearing our voices on this critical matter.