

July 8, 2009

Board of Education
TOWN OF WINDHAM
322 Prospect St.
Windham, CT 06280

Re: Statement on RFP to Contract-Out Food Services
"The Community Says NO to Outsourcing Our Schools' Food Services"

Chairman Folan & Board of Education Members;

My name is Debbie Dubord and I work as an assistant manager of food services at Windham Middle School. I am the President of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Chapter that represents 31 of your employees in the school district's cafeterias.

I am here tonight to deliver petitions signed by over 1,000 local residents and pledge forms signed by elected officials who all oppose outsourcing Windham Public Schools' cafeteria services.

As we said in our last statement to the Board back in March, our members are committed to a safe environment in Windham Public Schools. That requires serving the district's children healthy, nutritious meals every day.

We believe it is irresponsible to balance a budget by putting the health and safety of the students in our schools at risk. We also believe that adding more strain on local working families who are struggling in this difficult economy is not the way to close a short-term deficit.

That is why we have opposed the Superintendent's proposal to contract-out the schools' food services to a private, for-profit food services vendor from the beginning.

We are concerned because outside private vendors often cut corners in food quality, nutrition, and service to squeeze profits out of the meals they serve our kids. We can't be sure profit-motivated contractors won't import unsafe food from China into our schools to cut their bottom line.

We are also concerned that outsourcing meal services in our schools could result in less accountability. Not only does it add an extra layer of bureaucracy, but private vendors often recruit temporary employees from outside the community to replace the district's long-term employees.

The reality is that the district has employed food service professionals like us to prepare and serve

healthy, nutritious meals to students in our schools for more 70 years.

We have a contract in place with the Board that is fair and should be allowed to continue. We have "labor peace," and under the Municipal Employees Relations Act, disputes are resolved through binding arbitration.

If an outside private contractor takes over, labor and management follow a whole new set of rules under the National Labor Relations Board, where final disputes can result in a strike. As employees of the district, we are prohibited from striking now.

Rather than contract-out the food services we provide and disrupt the lives of the children we serve, we should be working together to find labor cost savings.

As you can see from the signatures we have gathered, the community agrees. We think the Board of Education should, too, and drop this outsourcing scheme once and for all.

Deborah Dubord

Food Services Assistant Manager, Windham Public Schools

President, Windham Board of Education Cafeteria Workers Chapter, CSEA SEIU Local 2001

CC: First Selectman Jean de Smet
CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Executive Council Members
CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Legislative Action Committee Members
Municipal Division Council Officers & Chapter Presidents

DD:dmo