

Resolution in Support of a Bill of Rights For Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff

Adopted AFT Massachusetts Executive Board March 2, 2024

- WHEREAS: paraprofessionals include education assistants and instructional assistants who work in elementary schools, secondary schools, or public institutions of higher education; and
- WHEREAS: education support staff include professionals who work in elementary schools, secondary schools, or public institutions of higher education in clerical and administrative services, transportation services, food and nutrition services, custodial and maintenance services, health and student services, technical services, and skilled trades; and
- WHEREAS: many paraprofessionals and education support staff are undercompensated for their work, and do not receive a living wage, much less a competitive, family-sustaining living wage; and
- WHEREAS: many paraprofessionals and education support staff lack access to high-quality, affordable health care and retirement benefits because they are intentionally hired for insufficient hours to receive those benefits, or otherwise are charged exorbitant employee premiums for health insurance; and
- WHEREAS: while paraprofessionals and education support staff are often the most diverse subset of school employees, are more likely to have grown up in the communities they serve, and are the trusted school community members for many students and parents, the voices of paraprofessionals and education support staff are not always valued in forming school policies; and
- WHEREAS: paraprofessionals and education support staff often serve students facing systemic barriers, but are often excluded from professional growth and development opportunities; and
- WHEREAS: like many school employees, paraprofessionals and education support staff are too often subject to workplace violence and other safety hazards, including contaminants and extreme temperatures; and
- WHEREAS: paraprofessionals and education support staff deserve real solutions that would empower them to work in a stable, safe environment; have multi-year job security; receive livable and competitive wages, access to sufficient hours, and fair compensation for their work; and have a voice on the job and meaningful input in school policy; and

WHEREAS: respecting paraprofessionals and education support staff is essential to creating and maintaining safe and supportive school environments that are conducive to students learning and thriving; and

WHEREAS: paraprofessionals and education support staff in AFT Massachusetts have won stronger wages, benefits, and working conditions through collective bargaining in recent years;

RESOLVE: Now, therefore, be it resolved that AFT Massachusetts shall work to support its locals in winning contracts that ensure that paraprofessionals and education support staff:

- Receive a livable, competitive wage;
- Have access to high quality, affordable healthcare;
- Have strong retirement benefits with annual cost of living increases;
- Have at least 16 weeks of paid family and medical leave, and paid leave for school closures;
- Have access to training and professional development opportunities;
- Have enough resources and supplies to do their job, including up-to-date technology and personal protective equipment;
- Have a say in the policies that impact their working conditions, including around the use of electronic monitoring and AI in schools;
- Be able, where appropriate, to be involved in individual education plan meetings for students they work with;
- Have safe and healthy workplaces, and a way to report workplace concerns;
- Not experience understaffing that makes it impossible to do their jobs effectively, efficiently, and safely; and
- Have year-round job security, rather than be laid off and rehired each school year.

(For discussion and vote at the AFT Massachusetts Annual Convention, May 4, 2024)

REVISION OR COMMENTS

ADOPTED _____

DEFEATED _____

TABLED _____