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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

I am a Paraprofessional in a Life Skills Elementary classroom for the Apollo-Ridge School District. I am writing to voice my displeasure on the new proposal of rigorous standards for Paraprofessionals. I have been at my position for 9 years. I have attended numerous workshops provided by my school district, years of experience and care with the students I work with, excellent evaluations from my employer, as well as being deemed "highly qualified" through my school district. I feel that I am already highly qualified at the position I hold. If I ever experience a situation that I feel that I may need help with, I always ask the classroom teacher for support. I have had an excellent working relationship with any teacher that I've worked with, and they have always supported me with a question or a behavior problem that I might have had to deal with.

I feel that a test couldn't possibly show the experience and care that I have with the students I work with. I follow a lesson plan made by the teacher in our Life Skills classroom that deals with repetition every day. We work on letters of the alphabet, counting and identifying numbers, and writing their names. We are fortunate if we have students that can read simple sentences, or add and subtract single or double digit math problems. In our classroom we are dealing with many disabilities and behavior problems that only being a caring and experienced staff member could deal with.

We also are a poor school district with many low income students. It would be financially impossible for our district to hire a Paraprofessional with a degree. We start out at minimum wage and that wouldn't be a salary that would appeal to a new hire. I have worked 9 years and have an income of \$11.00 an hour, with 10 months of benefits, with no pay in the summer. This isn't a position that someone could make a living on without other means of financial support! Those of us who work in our classroom or the Learning Support classrooms are not here for the money, believe me! We also have a shortage of substitutes and, at times, have had to stretch our duties to cover others when needed. Our district knows that we could use extra help, but maintains the stance that they cannot afford to hire more.

I am sincerely hoping that you will take my position in consideration and let the "highly qualified positions" that the school districts have already set

for their employees, stand as the only standard that is needed to do the jobs that we love. As I've already noted, I feel that all the experiences that I have received over the years should make me safe as a valued employee, and that I shouldn't have the fear of losing my position with taking a test that would have no impact on the job that I do everyday with the Life Skills' students. Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Pamela L. Peace

Mrs. Pamela L. Peace
1281 Edmon Road
Apollo, PA 15613