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Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, Pa 17126-0333

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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Mr. Jim Buckheit,

Hi! My name is Peggy Seemiller. I am a paraprofessional for the Baldwin-Whitehall School District in Pittsburgh, Pa. I am writing in response to Chapter 14, Special Education Regulations, Pa. I have held my current position for 7 years plus I was a substitute for 2 years. Baldwin-Whitehall does not hire their paraprofessionals off the street. I had to take a test to assess my knowledge of Math and Reading, I had to write two essays explaining why I felt that special needs children should be fully included. Twice the Special Education Director and the School Psychologist interviewed me. At the time a college degree was not a requirement of employment and I feel very grateful that Baldwin-Whitehall allows me to work in a profession that I love and enjoy doing. I work in the Life Skills room with 7 students, 1 in a wheelchair, 1 non-verbal (he uses a Dynavox) student, 1 student has Down Syndrome, 2 have Mental Retardation and 2 have Autism. Our District has 9 professional development days per school year that relate to the work I do. I also work closely with the teaching team plus physical and occupational therapists. Much of the work I do is common sense. No test or rigorous standards will capture all the content areas I have been assigned to when supporting students. Nor will a test help me when I have to redirect a student having a melt down in the hall or when a student gets her menstrual cycle for the first time at school. I have cleaned up vomit, blood, urine, and feces. I have been kicked, bitten, punched, pinched, spit on. No test prepares you for these things. No test will show my experience and compassion shown to the students during difficult times.

Let me give you some personal background about myself. I am a high school graduate, I spend most of my childhood helping my (divorced) mother raise my brother with Autism. I know first hand what it is like to fight the system for fair opportunities for special needs children. I also know the pain of being singled out and not being treated equal because of my brother. I am not working for the school to have summers off, as people so freely want to judge teachers for. I work with special needs children because I am truly comfortable and in my element. No test that the state comes up with will see my devotion to the students in my care. I have (on my own time) made books on tape, made individual learning games. I've made songs on tape for students from different countries to help them learn the English language. I've made tapes for a student in the hospital so that she would not fall behind. I have toilet-trained students.

I can't understand why after all my years of service that in 2010 I can be considered no longer qualified for my job?

I propose that the Paraprofessionals already employed (5 year minimum) in good standing with satisfactory evaluations by their school districts retain their jobs. The School District knows what their staff is doing on a day-to-day basis. Please allow the

Districts to retain their present, qualified employees in a necessary program they see fit.
Thank you for your time.

Peggy Seemiller
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Peggy Seemiller 7/8/07