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From: Colleen [mailto:colnchas@enter.net]
Sent: Thursday, October 25, 2007 9:47 AM
To: 00statbd@psupen.psu.edu
Subject: Chapter 14 Comments Para's

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear State Board of Education;

In Dr Rhen's discussion last night at Arcadia University where she overviewed the proposed changes to Chapter 14, I was absolutely stunned to hear that there is considered little support for raising qualifications of paraprofessionals. I am stunned because I know for a fact with the various coalitions that I belong to with large memberships, that have submitted comments supporting this. These groups, such as the Value Coalition and the Pennsylvania Education for All Coalition represent far more than just one person writing support.

As a parent, who has literally watched my child "suffer" because of the use of untrained aides, some who thought they were doing the right thing and were actually being abusive, and others who tried, but they themselves could barely spell, I can't help but feel this is a crucial and demands far more attention than counting the number of letters. Yes, the laws state that aides must be supervised, but the reality is there is little to no actual supervision in the day to day activities they perform. The person who cuts their hair has to have greater qualifications than the person working one on one with them day in and day out.

It is understandable that some schools may fear that if the qualifications are raised there may be a lack of people from which to hire, or that the pay will need to be raised to meet the level of professionalism required, but should

Page 2 of 2

that dictate what children need or receive?

If the fear of costs is given accurate weight, then it must also be offset by the costs of not having qualified staff. The costs in terms of lost potential and education to the children. And most importantly the cost of setting them up for failure and inevitably behaviors which in turn increases the costs of requiring greater resources and services and behaviors supports, additional meetings and most likely due process and litigation, and setting up adversarial relationships with families.

Our children can not afford to have the bulk of their educational outcomes dependent on the luck of the draw, as to if they happen to be the lucky one to get an appropriately trained person working with them. Please raise the bar and show that children with disabilities and their education is valued.

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