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From: Jennifer King [mailto:jking@pa.net]

Sent: Friday, October 26, 2007 11:06 AM

To: 00statbd@psupen.psu.edu

Subject: Chapter 14 Revisions - Paraprofessionals

#2618

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To the State Board of Education:

I am writing concerning the latest draft of the Proposed 22 PA Code Chapter 14 regulations, in particular the proposed changes regarding paraprofessional qualifications. I am in support of the proposed increase in educational requirements for paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania. Our district has provided one-on-one aides having bachelor degrees for my son, even though he does not have unusual needs. These aides have done an excellent job in supporting and encouraging him to reach his potential. I contrast our experience with that of other students in other districts in Pennsylvania where the aides have only high school degrees and no experience.

I understand that cost is a consideration in this issue. I would like to point out that there can be hidden costs with accepting lower educational standards.

1. Inadequately supporting a student with disabilities can result in increased behavioral issues,

Page 2 of 2

leading to the need for behavioral supports that require a behavioral consultant and additional staff time for meetings and paperwork. Behavioral issues can greatly detract from the education of classmates.

2. Inadequately trained aides may result in the student not making adequate progress in his/her education. Costs associated with this can include increased meetings, additional evaluations, additional services, change of placement that is likely a more costly and more restrictive placement, litigation, and due process hearings. Long term costs can include affected students being dependent on public assistance throughout adulthood if they are unable to achieve competitive employment as a result of inadequate public education. I have an adult family member with a disability here in Pennsylvania who is dependent on public support despite the fact that his disability affects him only moderately.

I compare this issue with other current Pennsylvania initiatives like early childhood education. Programs like Head Start and full day Kindergarten address the fact that spending more money initially can result in an overall cost savings by reducing the need for future spending. I encourage the State Board of Education to carefully consider the long term implications of this issue.

Sincerely yours,
Jennifer King
New Cumberland, Pennsylvania