



For Immediate Release

Contact: Larry Dorman, AFSCME Council 4, (860) 989-9127 or ldorman@council4.org

Killingly School Paraprofessionals Sound Alarm Over Stalled Contract Negotiations and Departure of Paraprofessionals To Other Towns

Aug. 23, 2021—Killingly School Paraprofessionals and their union, Local 3689 of AFSCME Council 4, say they are concerned by the exodus of their colleagues to neighboring towns offering better wages and working conditions while negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement have reached formal impasse.

According to Local 3689 President Jennifer Wetherbee, a paraprofessional at Killingly Intermediate School, at least 18 paraprofessionals resigned from their positions after the end of the 2020-21 academic year. More resignations are coming, further depleting what had been a 128-member bargaining unit.

“We are here for the kids, always,” Wetherbee said, “but how can we provide quality services when we are so understaffed? What exactly is the district’s plan to meet Individualized Education Program requirements? Where is their commitment to providing our students with the academic and emotional support they need?”

The union warned there will be more departures absent action by the Superintendent and the Board of Education. “Killingly is becoming a steppingstone for our members to seek employment with other towns,” Wetherbee added.

Starting wages in Killingly are \$14.62 an hour, compared with neighboring towns that offer paraprofessionals \$16 or more an hour.

In a letter of resignation sent to Superintendent Robert Angeli on Aug. 9, Monique Revellese, a former special education paraprofessional at Killingly Memorial School, wrote that she had accepted a full-time paraprofessional position in nearby Canterbury. Her new job includes a \$4 an hour wage increase to \$19.22 per hour.

“This was a difficult decision for me to make because I love working at KMS,” Revellese wrote. “Killingly Memorial School is a wonderful environment where I have always felt valued and part of a team,” she wrote. “I will be forever grateful for the opportunity that was provided to me over the years and I will miss my KMS family dearly.”

Negotiations for a successor bargaining agreement with Local 3689 reached impasse earlier this month. The process is now headed to interest arbitration before the State Board of Labor Relations, according to Council 4 Staff Representative Tricia Santos, who is the local union's spokesperson.

Santos, who is also the advocate for the Killingly School Bus Drivers Union, Local 1303-261 of Council 4, pointed out that a recent memorandum of understanding between the town and the union will lift their wages to \$25 an hour for the 2021-22 academic year only.

"The Superintendent and the Board of Education need to demonstrate a similar commitment to recruiting paraprofessionals," she said. "After all, they're putting a table out during the Tomato Festival to attract bus drivers but nothing to attract paraprofessionals."

Killingly paraprofessionals are mobilizing to secure a fair settlement. Their plans include turning out for the Sept. 8 and Sept. 22 Board of Education meetings and other activities to engage parents and the community.

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