

**Testimony of Jaime Fonseca
Education Support Professional, Orange
On A-3395
Before Assembly Labor Committee
February 14, 2019**

Good morning, my name is Jaime Fonseca and I am an Educational Support Professional in the Orange School District. I am here today to urge you to pass Assembly Bill A-3395, which would prohibit employers from entering into a subcontracting agreement that affects the employment of those covered by a negotiated contract during the term of that contract.

This bill is about fairness and treating our public schools' most dedicated professionals with the same respect that we show students every single day.

Educational Support Professionals like me dedicate our lives to helping children learn by working with them one-on-one, by keeping our schools safe and clean, and by being a consistent, comforting presence for students wherever they are in a New Jersey public school.

We aren't just doing a job. We are professionals with a passion and a purpose. We are a key part of every thriving school community. So, when school districts move to privatize their educational support professionals, everyone in the community suffers.

When subcontracting happens, the students have to worry that their bus drivers will be different each day, or that there will be a different person - a stranger - perhaps, greeting them as they enter the hallways of their school.

This bill doesn't prevent privatization and subcontracting entirely. It only ensures that, when we sit down and negotiate with a board of education and we sign a contract with that board, that the board must honor the contract it ratified. That probably seems obvious, but unfortunately, it's not always the case.

Take, for example, what happened last year to one of my colleagues in another district:

After months of fair and honest negotiating, her association and the board came to an agreement and signed a contract. Two days later, the district started the process to subcontract the jobs of the very same district paraprofessionals they had just signed a contract with. If successful, that board would have fired more than 60 paraprofessionals - - who just spent months bargaining with them in good faith.

...over, please

So, I ask you: Is it fair these employees, my fellow union members, sat down and negotiated with their board of education only to find out after signing a contract that the board was planning to fire them all anyway?

What happened in that district has happened all over this state.

Last year alone, more than 13 school districts moved to privatize their educational support professionals during the life of an active collective bargaining agreement.

This bill would prevent this from happening, and it allow our school communities to focus on educating children.

At the end of the day, this about our students.

Because when a district moves to subcontract some of its lowest paid, but most dedicated professionals, people who usually live in the very same community where they work, everyone in that school community loses, especially students.

Our students deserve better. And my colleagues, who serve those students every day, deserve your **YES** vote today, because this bill means consistency in our classrooms, our buses, our hallways, our offices and our cafeterias - - every place in our schools where we help our students learn, grow and succeed.

Please vote **YES**.

It's true what they say about ESPs: We do this work for the kids. We do it well. And we deserve to be treated fairly and with the dignity that enables us to excel at our jobs. We do not deserve to work under the constant threat of privatization.

As you consider this bill, I ask you to think of the educational support professionals who would be affected by this bill - - the bus drivers, the classroom aides, the secretaries, the school security officers, the cafeteria workers, the maintenance and custodial workers, and the many others, who have dedicated our professional lives to ensuring that every child has a safe, clean, comfortable environment in which to learn. And I ask you to support **A-3395**.

Thank you.