

To: PA House Education Committee
Re: HB 1369 Hearing

My name is Matt Pileggi. I am a 34 year old resident of Levittown, PA and I have four children. I attended Neshaminy School District as a child and now my two oldest children are in Neshaminy elementary schools.

We've had a contract impasse since 2008 in Neshaminy. We pay our teachers, on average, \$65.66/hour, provide them with 100% free health benefits, give them \$27,500 cash at retirement, allow them to keep their 100% free benefits until they are Medicare eligible, and back their pensions as per the PSERS laws. These as per the the CBA that was agreed upon in 2002 - nearly a decade ago.

The community has clearly demonstrated that it feels the terms of this contract is too expensive. We have elected 9 officials who have put together a reasonable offer that has been flippantly ignored by the NFT. Not only do they lift their noses at the community's offer, but they expect to receive salary increases retro-active to the 2008 school year as well. Through it all they have been working the bare-minimum of their contracts, going so far as to boycott student's graduation ceremonies and leave parents blind by not attending Back to School Nights.

Why, in a period of great recession, where unemployment climbs and foreclosures in the area spike, are we not being threatened with an actual teacher strike? 10 years of free health benefits and built-in salary increases ranging from 3-19% on the backs of tax payers who now wish to re-evaluate the contract. And who are the ones paying the price? Our kids. The very people around whom we've built this entire system!

I ask you this: why does this community agree to pay school taxes - for the education of the children or the employment of the teachers? For the retirement security of the employees or the hopes of success for those who get one pass at their primary education?

Yet here we are faced with the 4th year of a labor impasse that continues to guarantee teachers their salaries and benefits while the community who funds it has no such guarantees. While the community who both funds and consumes the service has no ability to correct their own course. While the 9 Board members, elected to represent 52,000 tax-payers, has no decisive authority as the stewards of \$170 Million dollars in funds. The only wiggle room they have is of direct cost to the students: increased parking permits, loss of physical education and certain extra curricular activities, paired down technology capabilities and very few advancements.

This is surely not the thorough and efficient public education system that Neshaminy residents had hoped for.

Sincerely,
Matt Pileggi, 31 Trail Road, Levittown PA

Frank Farry - Anti-Strike Legislation

From: <robingrauel@verizon.net>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/24/2011 1:01 PM
Subject: Anti-Strike Legislation

Dear Mr. Farry,

I am away on vacation, yet, because of it's importance, I felt I needed to make the time to add my testimony regarding the anti-strike legislation from my hotel room.

I am a taxpayer living in the Neshaminy School District and two of my children attend Neshaminy schools. I am quite fed up with all that is going on regarding the NFT/NCB contract dispute just as many other parents and taxpayers are. I firmly believe that the NFT is acting selfish and greedy in their demands for continued top-notch benefits which should have been eliminated long ago. Retro-active pay is just impossible and, more importantly, their health care package is one that is virtually non-existent elsewhere. Despite the continuous testimony that taxpayers have shared regarding their own personal hardships, the NFT has ignored their pleas and is continuing to expect the money to be found so that they may be the only ones to continue to have their lives unaffected by the economic crisis at hand. No one is immune, and their salary and benefits should always be contingent on how much the taxpayers can reasonably afford, within the limits of Act 1.

I have been an employed registered nurse for the past 18 years. I have gone from having an "excellent" health care package at very little out-of-pocket cost to me to a "very good" package which I pay into out of my bi-weekly paychecks. My current family plan costs \$12,000 per year and I pay 22% toward that cost. I have \$25 co-pays, but I am still happy with my plan. The alternative would be that my employer cut back elsewhere-such as the number of workers-and that is not the best option in my opinion. I would rather help my employer and allow my co-workers (including myself) keep their jobs. Now, my plan is half the cost of the current NFT's plan, yet it is still "very good"...so, why can't the same be done in the current contract dispute? I can't figure it out other than for greedy reasons I guess. To top it all off...I am a health care PROVIDER and I do not get the top-notch benefits that the NFT currently enjoys...it makes no sense.

Another "work-to-contract" initiative is now in place and the threat to strike has been made. Where do they think all of this is going to get them? I know my opinion will not be changing despite their temper-tantrum tactics. Their initiatives DO affect the children....the teachers will be less prepared for their school year and less available to the students in need during work-to-contract, and the students will not be receiving their education at all if a strike is called for!

Strikes for school teachers should be unlawful...the teachers should be considered "essential personnel" who are expected to be functioning in their level of employment despite any external stimuli. They need to be there for our kids instead of creating yet another hardship for our community. Please, again I beg of you, do what you can to pass this legislation and make teacher strikes in the state of Pennsylvania a thing of the past.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Robin M. Grauel

Jennifer L. Vetere
2628 Milford Drive
Bethel Park, PA 15102
veterejs@hotmail.com

August 24, 2011

PA House Education Committee
RE: HB 1369 Hearing

Dear Education Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 1369 (The Strike Free Education Act). I encourage the passing of this bill to ensure our children the uninterrupted education they deserve and need.

Teacher strikes are not beneficial to anyone...except teacher unions and the teachers they represent. Strikes are detrimental to school districts and their non-striking employees, to taxpayers, to parents and families, to parents' employers and co-workers, but most importantly strikes are detrimental to the students. I could go on citing statistics that you have no doubt seen time and time again. Instead, I would like to give you a glimpse of a few of those hurt most by teacher strikes...the children.

Regarding the 6 week teacher strike in the Bethel Park School District last fall and the loss of holiday vacation time that resulted as well as the possibility of another strike this fall, my young daughters had these reactions:

Haley, age 10 ½ and now entering 5th grade, was "bored" during the strike and had trouble readjusting to the routine again once school resumed. Haley says strikes "give us less time off for breaks and less summer to enjoy." This was an issue especially during the holidays when family and friends were in town or on break and my children missed out on some events because they had to be in school.

Alyssa, age 8 ½ and now entering 3rd grade, cried many times during the strike because she wanted to be at school and see her teacher; she could not understand why it was happening. Alyssa became angry at all teachers, including her own who she loved and knew did not support the strike. We had to remind her often that it was not her teacher's fault.

Lauren, age 5, is so excited to start kindergarten this fall and says she will be "bored" if school does not start on time.

During that strike in our district last fall, my daughters and several friends decided on their own accord to make their own picket signs which read "HONK FOR SCHOOL"! Nearly every single car that drove by that day honked for them and for school. This speaks volumes to how much children want and need to be in the classroom.

My hope is for this bill to pass into law and Pennsylvania adopts Strike Free Education like the majority of states in our country already have. Thank you so much for your attention to my thoughts on this important issue that demands resolution for the sake of our children.

Respectfully yours,

Jennifer L. Vetere

From: <hcovon@juno.com>
To: <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/24/2011 11:19 AM
Subject: TEACHERS NO STRIKE

Hi Frank,

Just a short note to say that I and everyone I have talked to about the "NO TEACHER STRIKES" support you in this bill you are cosponsoring.

My understanding is that it's a bill that will be fair to all the parties involved, especially the children. Our children's education is far too important to allow strikes.

Keep up the great work.

Harris Covon
17 Scarlet Oak Rd
Levittown, PA 19056

hcovon@juno.com
215-943-0825

57-Year-Old Mom Looks 25
Mom Reveals \$5 Wrinkle Trick That Has Angered Doctors!
<http://thirdpartyoffers.juno.com/TGL3141/4e55163a39e4985b023st06vuc>

From: Bob <k9neg1@comcast.net>
To: "FFarry@pahousegop.com" <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 10:30 AM
Subject: HB 1369

Hi Frank,

I am interested in this bill getting passed but I am not sure why binding arbitration is not included in the plan! It works for other public servants, like police officers and firefighters, so why not teachers. It would have prevented the situation we have here in the Neshaminy School District. By allowing non-binding arbitration you provide a step in the process that seems to do nothing but prolong the process. If my memory serves me correctly an arbitrator in the Neshaminy case put forth a compromise in 2009 that the teachers accepted but the school board rejected. Had this been a binding arbitration setting we would not be in our present situation. Let's be fair to everyone, especially the taxpayers, and include a provision for binding arbitration in the process at some point where all else has failed, say after a contract has not been agreed upon after a year since the last one expired!

Thanks for providing a forum for us to make our feelings and opinions matter!

Bob Burnett

Sent from my iPad

From: Wendy Schuchardt
229 Tina Drive, Langhorne, PA 19047
215-582-2665
DustyJil@gmail.com

Date 8/24/2011

Dear Pennsylvania House Education Committee Members,

Good morning, I am Wendy Schuchardt, Middletown Township resident, taxpayer, veteran, and parent of a student in the Neshaminy School District. I am asking that you strongly consider, and pass House Bill 1369.

I answered the call to serve my country while in college. Just like most teachers answered the call to educate our children. I am a veteran of the cold war. I did not protect our country from terrorists whose goal was to kill and maim. As an officer assigned to the II German Korps, I did protect our country from communists whose goal was to overthrow our government and take away our freedom. This bill is ultimately about freedom.

As a resident, taxpayer and parent, I understand that it is in our collective interest to provide the best possible education to our children. This includes many things, but most importantly an attractive employment package to attract the best teachers. Once that package is presented teachers have the freedom to accept employment, bargain in good faith for a modified employment offer, or choose employment elsewhere. As a veteran, I served to protect this freedom.

Once employment is accepted by a teacher, I believe that teacher has an obligation to serve the students and community to the best of their ability. Continuing to accept paychecks continues this acceptance of responsibility. A strike or other work action that undermines the education of our children is not acceptable. This bill supports the negotiation process and attempts to prevent disruption of our children's education. Please pass this bill.

Sincerely yours,

Wendy Schuchardt

Frank Farry - HB1369 Testimony

From: Jennifer Germana <jorgenjb@hotmail.com>
To: Frank Farry <ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/24/2011 12:27 AM
Subject: HB1369 Testimony

August 23, 2011

PA House Education Committee
Re: HB1369 Hearing

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I am writing to voice my support for HB1369, and to implore you to pass this crucial anti-strike bill. It is imperative that our children are not effected by labor disputes, and have access to consistent, high-quality education here in Pennsylvania.

Thank you,

Jennifer Germana
368 Hulme Avenue
Langhorne, PA 19047

Frank Farry - hb1369 testimony

From: "Patrick Kitchenman" <patkitch3@comcast.net>
To: <ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 8:31 PM
Subject: hb1369 testimony

To the Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania House Education Committee:

Teaching is a noble profession. It is a very challenging profession. However, so are many other professions. Imagine becoming ill and finding your doctor has taken the summer off. Imagine calling the police only to find they are away for the weekend. We all have our stress in life. At some point, teachers, like us, have chosen their profession. Just as one would hope no politician would enter into politics for the health plan, the retirement plan, or the pay, one would also hope that teachers entered into their profession for the right reasons. In our state, teachers enjoy salaries that often range into the six figure area. In Neshaminy School District, they also enjoy free healthcare. At this very moment, if these same teachers do not get the healthcare plan they want, and if they don't get the pay raises they want, they have the option of walking away from their jobs. The idea is astounding if you look at it from the right point of view. Unemployment is way up, there are good, qualified teachers that would do anything to have the deal that teachers in Pennsylvania have. For them to walk away is a slap in the face to any hard working person in this country. How dare they act as though they are enduring hardships alone. We all are! You are the ones that can stop this insanity. 37 states don't allow strikes, and their education system has no better or worse results than ours, so there is no results driven reason to allow this to continue. It is a legalized form of blackmail. The only teachers that support that are not in the profession for the right reasons. Unions spend alot of money on political campaigns. The only politicians that would vote against this bill are also not in their profession for the right reasons. Please vote to support HB1369 so we can bring the right people in to teach our students, and to stop holding your hardworking constituents hostage with strike threats until they agree to raise taxes to pay for their salaries. It is the right thing to do, and if you are a true representative of your people, it is the only thing to do.

Respectfully,

Patrick Kitchenman
68 Forsythia Drive East
Levittown, PA 19056

Frank Farry - HB 1369 Pass the bill!

From: "Howard Gottlieb" <Howard.Gottlieb@Comcast.net>
To: "Frank Farry" <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 5:34 PM
Subject: HB 1369 Pass the bill!

Dear Frank,

As you probably know by now I feel that you should vote to pass HB 1369. Children should never have to suffer because of labor disputes. It unconscionable that teachers can go on strike. Especially in Neshaminy Schools where teachers are in the top 5 % of wage earners and their students are middle of the pack in PA by their test scores. Please pass this testimony on to the hearing members.

Howard Gottlieb
833 Green Ridge Circle
Langhorne, PA 19053

Frank Farry - Support for HB 1369 and 1640

From: Susie Merchant <sjmerchant@msn.com>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 5:20 PM
Subject: Support for HB 1369 and 1640

Dear Mr. Farry,

I support HB 1369 and 1640 to eliminate teacher strikes. It is wrong for children to be placed in the middle of a labor agreement dispute. They deserve to have continuity of learning opportunities through the school year without being penalized by losing their scheduled breaks and part of their summer. They do not have the capacity to work well without any breaks. It results in undue stress and it harms them emotionally.

I would like to see you take these bills one step further and specifically include work slowdowns, e.g., work-to-contract actions, in the bills. This is the same as a strike and the children are getting further and further behind after two such actions by the NFT.

As you know, the NFT has taken NSD hostage and is using our children as ransom. It's time to put an end to this inappropriate behavior now.

Best regards,

Susie Merchant
191 Apple Valley Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047
215-702-7424

Frank Farry - HB 1369

From: Suzette Liptrot <suzetteliptrot@msn.com>
To: <ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 2:01 PM
Subject: HB 1369

Dear Mr. Farry,

Please help to pass House Bill 1369. Neshaminy School District desperately needs it! The teachers are threatening to strike and they already are "striking" by working to contract. I fear for my son's education. The kids are not learning anything. They are told to read silently in class and they grade each others tests. Please stop this insanity!

Thank you,

Suzette Liptrot
29 Tempo Road,
Levittown, PA 19056

Frank Farry - Testimony for HB 1369

From: "Karen Gatewood " <karen.gatewood@verizon.net>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 1:38 PM
Subject: Testimony for HB 1369

Please pass HB 1369. As a parent of three children in the school district of Neshaminy, I am tired of the union having the power to use our children as pawns. This bill will enable both sides to truly negotiate and take away the unfair ability of a union to wage war against the children of taxpayers who pay their bills.

Thank you so much,
Karen Gatewood
Levittown PA 19057

Frank Farry - HB 1369

From: "Karen Orr" <korr@northamericanwindow.com>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 1:00 PM
Subject: HB 1369

Please pass this to save our children from the NFT!

Karen Orr
Sales Assistant
North American Window and Door Co. Inc.
New Hope Office

215-862-7296-phone
215-862-7297- fax
Proverbs 17:22
"A joyful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." (ESV)

Enjoy, Stay Cheerful, & Stay Joyful

Frank Farry - HB 1369

From: "Robert" <rhager11@comcast.net>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 12:49 PM
Subject: HB 1369

Dear Mr.Farry ,

Please pass HB 1369 to save the taxpayers and to give our children a better education in the public schools that were intended for the middle class, so that they may have the same chances for a better,higher education as the other social classes have been getting for decades.

The days of Union Leader's bullying the social classes are over. We need a more professional Union. Once again we need teachers who really want to give back and not steal from the taxpayers.Forget the perks .It has and always will be about the children who deserve the right to be taught.

The middle class deserves the same respect. And for twenty years we have not seen it. Also tired of the strikes and the threats.

Sincerely,

Linda K.-H

Frank Farry - hb 1369

From: Jamie Waters <jwaters2007@verizon.net>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/22/2011 11:14 PM
Subject: hb 1369

Frank

I think it is great that this meeting is being held on Thursday at NHS. Our community is surely suffering with the contract situation at Neshaminy. I think in theory the bill is a good one. I really like the mandatory negotiating sessions. I would like to see a mediator address the budget situation during a mandatory meeting. For example the Neshaminy School Board can only increase taxes by a small percentage each year due to the Act 1 law. I believe that if the NFT's demands were met the board would not be in compliance with Act 1. If the NFT was required to submit an offer within the boundaries of Act 1 things could move a lot quicker because both sides would be required to submit offers within the requirements of Act 1. Or if the union wants to take this to the ballot they can fund the expense and see what happens.

Jamie Waters
215-803-1210

Frank Farry - Free our children! Re: HB 1369 Hearing- Do the right thing!

From: "Brian Toal" <briantdi1@gmail.com>
To: <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/22/2011 2:08 PM
Subject: Free our children! Re: HB 1369 Hearing- Do the right thing!

Dear Mr Farry,

You have the opportunity to right a wrong that has erroded the PA Public Education System for decades and held both the students and the parents (taxpayers) hostage to the wants of Teachers. It is time to fix this now! Schools are not sweatshops or shipyards where unions threaten, bully and strike to get what they want... these are our schools and our children and yet, FTA still threaten, bully and strike in front of the (Neshaminy) students. We cannot afford the compensation they are already recieving and they will always want more. **"If the teachers aren't striking, then the taxes will be hiking"**! How is that fair and what kind of way is that to run an education system? Please save our education system and our lives! This be the single most important opportunity in your career to do the right thing. Please don't miss it!
Support Strike Free Education in PA HB 1369 !

**Brian
Langhorne, PA**

Frank Farry - HB1369 Testimony

From: The Continos <ajs35@comcast.net>
To: <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/22/2011 10:51 AM
Subject: HB1369 Testimony

Rep. Farry,

We are writing in support of HB1369, The Strike Free Education Act, that is currently under consideration in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. We reside in Bethel Park, PA and have 2 children, ages 9 & 12 enrolled in the Bethel Park School District.

Many Bethel Park students had been adversely impacted academically by the teacher strike that had occurred in our district in the fall of 2010. Children who are considered special needs in particular thrive off of a consistent educational environment. This strike interfered with these children's progress and had a negative impact on their development. Although we personally created opportunities for our children to academically develop during this time, many other parents did not. Returning to school after a 6 week absence created the need for "re-teaching" skills that should have been devoted toward learning new material, further wasting valuable classroom time.

We as taxpayers have, in good faith, paid our property taxes and earned income taxes to this district, and we expect in return professionalism and commitment to our children's education. The education system has failed us because of these strikes. Any employee that is paid via any taxpayer dollars should be banned from strikes in order to not further disrupt our children's right to a proper education.

Thank you in advance for your support of this act for the sake of our children's future!

Susan and Brian Contino
3909 Mimosa Drive
Bethel Park, PA 15102
412.854.9774

From: Kathryn Hogan <ckchogan@verizon.net>
To: "FFarry@pahousegop.com" <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 12:33 PM
Subject: Anti strike bill

Mr. Farry

I am opposed to your anti strike bill. It punishes teachers unfairly when a school board like Neshaminy flat out refuses to negotiate. In this bill you support, beyond meeting 4 times a month, exactly how are the school boards held accountable to NEGOTIATE? Neshaminy is a mess right now because of the take it or leave approach of the board. Support a bill that requires the board to negotiate in good faith.

Thank you,
Kathryn Hogan
Sent from my iPhone

Frank Farry - HB1369

From: "Linda Shernoff" <linda107@verizon.net>
To: <FFarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/23/2011 12:15 PM
Subject: HB1369

Dear Representative Farry:

I am so glad that you are having this hearing on Thursday to address the current strike situation with the Neshaminy School District – ground zero in a lengthy and bitter strike.

This is not the first time that the NFT has held our children “hostage” and if legislation is not passed to prevent it, I’m sure it won’t be the last.

Back in the 80’s when my children were in elementary school, the NFT had a strike that lasted several months. At that time we heard the same rhetoric – we have the kid’s interest at heart – don’t you want the best for your children? If you want the best teachers you have to pay them higher salaries. Blah, blah, blah!!! Uh, I don’t think so – test scores have gone down even AFTER their outrageous salary/benefit demands were met and the “better” teachers were kept.

And now we have the same situation again – the children and taxpayers are being held hostage. My husband and I are on Social Security. Our incomes are fixed – we are paying for medical as high as 50%. I find it amusing that these educated, “professionals” are balking at paying their fair share. **We, the taxpayers, are their employers. We underwrite their salaries. We should be demanding that they step up to the plate!**

And speaking of the ideology that these teachers are “professionals”, by whose standards? Certainly not by mine. Does having a college degree make you a “professional” or does performing your job in a professional manner make you one. Much of their behavior begs the term “hooligan”.

I’d also do away with rewarding teachers for going back to school to get additional credits just so they can advance on the salary scale. I could see paying for their tuition for course-work that applied to their major or overall teaching performance, but to blindly hand out salary bumps for additional credits earned is ludicrous. Professionals in private industry often take additional courses at their own expense. If their company pays it **MIGHT** lead to promotion and future job rewards. But it certainly isn’t done on a thousand by thousand personnel population.

With regard to taxes, how much higher are property taxes in Middletown supposed to go? Who in their right mind would want to buy a home in this township, pay ever higher taxes and also suffer the potential educational damage when teacher’s strikes run amuck? Where is the educational incentive for future homebuyers?

They should not be allowed to strike. Their career choice should go with the understanding that they get a decent salary and benefits (which they do) and, if they are not happy, they can leave – just like in private industry. Tenure should go out the window. I’m sick of hearing comments like, “if we were in private industry we’d be making so much more”. I don’t believe that for a minute. In private industry you can be fired, you have to produce, **you have to show up. How can you do a job if you don’t show up for your job?** How many long-term employees in private industry who have stellar job/work performance are let go because companies merge, industries change, positions are eliminated no matter

how their performance history has been? Tenure should be a thing of the past and employment should be based on performance.

Please, hold the line on this stuff. No strikes in Pennsylvania. And, as for the NFT, if they don't like what's on the table, yes, fire them all and let them reapply for their jobs again knowing full well that future strikes are out of the question. Remember the Air Traffic Controllers? No one's job is sacrosanct.

Thank you.

Linda and Allan Shernoff
275 Strawberry Circle
Langhorne, PA 19047
Ph. 215-752-2942

August 23, 2011

House Education Committee
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

RE: HB1369

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

I am a parent of a former Neshaminy School District student.

Our teachers, the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, as I'm sure you are aware, have been working without a contract since 2008. Our teachers have been engaged in a "working strike" for approximately 1 ½ years. This was supposed to end in November of 2010, but it continued in many classrooms.

Our son has not been getting the best from his teachers. For instance, some teachers have been playing on facebook, their computers or their cell phones during class time. I have expressed my concern about these situations and basically nothing is done to discipline these teachers or get them to change. I know this to be true, because these practices continued. One teacher for the most part just handed out worksheets instead of actually teaching. Students have been self taught by many of their teachers over this time.

I believe that if we take away public school teachers' right to strike, this might have a positive impact on getting contracts settled sooner rather than having long drawn-out impasse's as we have here in Neshaminy.

I hope that you will support HB1369 . . for the students of Pennsylvania. I would also like to see "working to the contract" deemed illegal. The students can not give the union the contract they are seeking. This is an adult issue and needs to be kept out of the classroom.

We are fortunate to be able to send him to private school where he won't have to be concerned about his teachers striking to get a better contract. We, of course, are not thrilled about paying school taxes and private tuition, but our son's education could not get another year behind.

Please, for the students of Pennsylvania, approve HB1369. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gail Thibodeau

GT

Jennifer A. Bouton
119 Hollybrooke Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047
(H) 215-752-1065 / (M) 267-994-4552
jennbouton@yahoo.com

August 23, 2011

PA House Education Committee

Paul I Clymer, *Chair*
Will Tallman, *Secretary*
Duane Milne, *Subcommittee Chair on Higher Ed.*
Thomas J Quigley, *Subcommittee Chair on Basic Ed.*
Kathly L Rapp, *Subcommittee Chair on Special Ed.*

James R Roebuck Jr, *Democratic Chair*
Patrick J Harkins, *Democratic Secretary*
H Scott Conklin, *Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Higher Ed.*
Mark Longiotti, *Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Basic Ed.*
Chelsa Wagner, *Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Special Ed.*

Jim Cox
Joe Emrick
Mike Fleck
Mark M Gillen
Bernie O'Neill
Mike Reese
Brad Roae
Todd Rock
Justin J Simmons
Dan Truitt

Mike Carroll
John T Galloway
Michael H O'Brien
Ken Smith
Jake Wheatley

RE: HB 1369 Hearing

I submit testimony in support of HB 1369 – The Strike Free Education Act. Pennsylvania is overdue to join the 37 other states that prohibit teachers from striking. Like other vital public services – i.e., police, fire – teachers should not have the option of disrupting the education of our children as a tactic in a labor dispute. Strikes only serve to hurt our children by diminishing the quality of education they receive. It's a malicious attempt to leave parents scrambling for alternative childcare with the ultimate goal of putting pressure on school boards to capitulate to union demands because of the inconvenience. This is how after 35 years in the Neshaminy School District, we are at the present impasse. It's an impasse because we are going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, where many, many taxpayers have lost jobs, experience pay cuts and seen their healthcare costs skyrocket, while the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers (NFT) has stated they don't want to "see their standard of living changed".

This union has come to expect complacent boards that agree to every contract they present which has lead us up to the current unaffordable and egregious state of affairs our budget is facing. No longer can our district – the only one in PA – afford to pay 100% of the teachers' healthcare premiums. No longer can the district justify paying for Master's Equivalency Courses that are not toward an accredited Master's degree, but do allow for teachers to achieve step raises. In addition, the NFT is demanding 3 years worth of retroactive pay, estimated at \$12 million! Where is that supposed to come from???

Now the union has been authorized to strike this coming year. There appears to be no attempt by the NFT at real negotiations – which this legislation would force – and therefore a possible perpetual impasse. It is this strike vote that prompted me to immediately withdraw my two sons from their kindergarten enrollment this fall at Albert Schweitzer elementary. I will not subject my children to a wasted year – their first – at the hands of such selfishness. My children’s kindergarten year should be a wonderful and fun introduction to school and learning; one where their teacher is focused on being in the classroom – not what his/her NFT duties or Work to Contract ‘strike’ dictates. This year will be a loss for the students at Neshaminy, especially if the teachers are allowed to strike. I’ve spoken to parents who removed their children last year and their children had to take remedial classes because of the lack of work accomplished due to Work to Contract “strike”. My children will be homeschooled along with many, many others in this district so their education will go uninterrupted.

I urge this committee to get this legislation through and on the floor for a vote immediately. We need No-Strike-Education in Pennsylvania for the sake of our kids, these educational years they can’t get back, and for the sake of growing a strong Neshaminy School District where education is emphasized, kids are prioritized and parents and taxpayers are no longer subject to the stranglehold of a union strike.

Thank you for taking the time to come to Neshaminy, the hotbed in Pennsylvania for this very important issue. I am thankful to Representative Frank Farry for demonstrating the seriousness and urgency of this issue by bringing Harrisburg here to hold the hearing. I hope to see this moving to the Governor for signature soon.

Sincerely,

Jennifer A. Bouton

From: <bqt2081dd@aol.com>
To: <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/24/2011 11:05 AM
Subject: HB1369 Testimony

August 23, 2011

PA House Education Committee

Re: HB 1369 Hearing

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

There is nothing more important than educating the children of this country and, more importantly, Pennsylvania.

I never thought I would be writing to the Education Committee asking them to support a Bill that would prevent teachers from locking my child and every other child in Pennsylvania out of school but, here we are. I don't understand how every representative, senator, parent, taxpayer, citizen of PA is not behind this Bill.

Bethel Park Federation of Teachers' union locked my child out of school for SIX WEEKS last school year. Yes, you read that correctly...it's not a typo. Where in the world is there legislation that allows teachers to deny children an education? Pennsylvania is one of the few that allows this to happen and it must stop.

This is not the first time that Bethel Park has had their children locked out of school - it's the sixth time in 30 years!!!! Our district is number one in strikes which is something that residents are not proud of. Unfortunately, the teachers are proud of it and actually tell you that they are doing it (striking) because they love our children. Of course, the real reason is health care and salary as it has been for every single strike in Bethel Park. In fact, 99.99% of strikes in PA are about salary and health care.

The teachers were on strike for six weeks and when they went back to teaching the children they supposedly love, they were in the exact same position they were in when they went out on strike. What exactly did locking our children out of school do for the children? Nothing, at all. Pennsylvania accommodated the teachers by taking away every single day off on the school calendar with the exception of Memorial Day (yes, they went to school over Christmas and Spring break). Then, the school calendar was extended so that the teachers wouldn't lose a day of pay. Where exactly are the children's rights in this?

My son, Kai, is a senior this year. After the teachers locked him out of school, I removed him from the District and enrolled him in cyber school. My son will NOT have a senior year with all of his friends, senior prom, etc. because I will not allow the teachers to lock him out again. He will not be returning to Bethel Park this year because the contract is still not settled and teachers and their spouses have been

posting on facebook that they will strike again. I am not taking that risk with my son's education. Unfortunately, the school district loses out on funds as more and more people pull their children out of the school (and other schools in PA). The teachers are greedy and feel that \$98K is not enough for 9-10 months of employment and, in Bethel Park, an HMO will make the teachers lose focus in the classroom.

My son and I don't want to have to worry about his children (when he has a family) being locked out of school. Unfortunately, a lot of parents in Bethel Park are second generation (they endured a strike when they were students of Bethel Park) and now their children have had to endure a strike. Pretty soon, it will be third generation. Let's stop the madness.

The Department of Education's Mission is: "...to assist the General Assembly, the Governor, the Secretary of Education and Pennsylvania educators in providing for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of education." There is no "thorough and efficient system of education" if teachers are allowed to lock children out of school and deprive them of an education. Please live up to and fulfill the mission - support HB 1369. Now is the time to pass this legislation. Don't let it languish again and again and again - pass it NOW!

Sincerely,

Denise Dillon
5110 W. Library Avenue
Bethel Park, PA 15102

To the PA House Education Committee:

My family resides in Bethel Park, PA and were subjected to a strike lasting from October 25, 2010 through December 5, 2010. Six long weeks our children's public school education was put on hold. Their lives and those of family members were disrupted not only for those 6 weeks but for the entire rest of the year as students were deprived of all of their holiday breaks except Christmas Eve and Memorial Day. Opportunities were lost for families to spend holidays together and for some that opportunity will never happen again because they lost members of their family in the past year. After returning to school the atmosphere was very tense in many classrooms. Children of all ages sensed that and were uncomfortable and confused. There is no easy way to explain to an elementary student why their trusted teacher abandoned them. For older students who understood the situation respect for their teachers was lost.

My son was a senior and the administrators held school for seniors though they had no access to lesson plans or the actual course work the students should have been doing. During the senior school teachers picketed the students as they came to and from school and intimidated them in the parking lot. During this time many seniors were trying to complete college applications but could not get letters of recommendation from teachers or counselors. Nor could they receive assistance from their guidance counselors. Underclassmen were left to languish except for the educational opportunities some parents tried to provide if able. Most parents were left scrambling just to provide safe childcare for their children. Many, many children were thrust unprepared and too young into the role of "latch-key" child because their parents simply had no other option.

In the end, all students had 180 days of school being open to them but trust me NO student received 180 days of instruction. After six weeks teachers had to back track and review or move on and then some students were lost and had to find help on their own to get caught up. Other teachers decided to show movies on days that were originally scheduled to be holidays. If a student had the misfortune of having a teacher who was a member of the negotiating team, not only did they have to deal with an individual with an unprofessional attitude in the classroom they also had numerous classes where they were taught by a substitute because their teacher was off doing "union duties" during the school day. Data is not yet available to see how our students performed on PSSA tests but it is expected the effects of the strike will be evident. For students in AP classes, many felt unprepared for testing due to the shortened number of in-school days prior to the exams. The school was allowed to offer late testing dates of a whole week later. Not exactly enough time to make up for 6 weeks lost. Several AP tests were scheduled for the day of their senior prom.

Fortunately, AP students are often self-motivated learners. Those who performed well on their AP exams deserve extra recognition for the hard work they did on their own.

The negative effects on our students and families and taxpayers are numerous and we are faced with the uncertainty of having to go through this again because PA has yet to put a stop to this archaic practice. Bethel Park teachers have been threatening to strike again this year since before the last school year ended.

School Boards have no power to force teacher unions to accept the economic reality of the day. Act 1 (thankfully!) limits how much they can raise taxes but they have no power to force the unions to accept that. Beyond all of the detriment to the students is the cost of the strike to the taxpayer. There are ongoing costs whether school is in session or not. When teachers walk out and administrators are forced to close the school, they then have to pay unemployment compensation to secretaries, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, bus drivers and custodians who are also put out of a job. Not to mention the legal bills involved with the negotiation process. There were additional costs associated with providing senior school and extra help to students struggling as a result of 6 weeks off.

Strikes are a detriment to the quality of education our children deserve and a financial burden to the taxpayer forced to pay the many associated costs.

This attack on students and taxpayers must end in PA. Pa must finally join the other states in our great nation that prohibit this abomination being inflicted on the public education system. Please get HB 1369 onto Gov. Corbett's desk as quickly as possible. It is way past due!!

Sincerely,

Brenda D. Payseure
3224 Arapahoe Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15241
412 835-3428

Frank Farry - HB1369 Testimony

From: Dean Iampietro <deaniampietro@yahoo.com>
To: "Ffarry@pahousegop.com" <Ffarry@pahousegop.com>
Date: 8/24/2011 2:53 PM
Subject: HB1369 Testimony

PA House Education Committee
Re: HB 1369 Hearing

August 24, 2011

To whom it may concern:

I am a resident of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, writing in support of the passage of HB 1369. It is time to end teacher strikes in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania is now considered the 'strike capital of the USA'. Why is this? It's quite simply because of the number of strikes, now called work stoppages, held against the children and families of our Commonwealth.

In Bethel Park alone, there have been six strikes in the last 30 years, the most recent occurring last fall. There is a virtual certainty of another strike this fall or this coming spring, because the sides are so far apart.

The teachers union knows it has this tool in its back pocket, and is all too willing to use it as a bargaining chip. That is the equivalent of using our children as bargaining chips.

When asked about how a strike would affect families who have to alter their plans, the union leader of the Bethel Park Federation of Teachers said, quote, "That's not our problem."

Families are adversely affected on every level by a strike. Parents have to find babysitters, or in many cases, stay home and lose wages or sick time or vacation time. There is a palpable economic impact to families. But the problem is, those families don't get that back with 'retroactive pay' like the teachers do when they strike against our children and families.

Children like mine, who have autism, are adversely affected by changes in routine. A split school year from a strike is difficult for children who need the most attention, and who have the right to have an uninterrupted school year.

37 other states have legislation banning teacher strikes. At this time, teachers are the union public sector union permitted to strike in Pennsylvania. Firefighters and police officers do not strike. They still have their unions, and they still make good wages. This can and should be done with teacher unions.

Right now, it's all about power to the teacher unions, power over the taxpayer who funds their

salaries, power using the children, and power in this very state government, with the exorbitant amounts of dues money it uses to fund elections of representatives.

We want fairly paid teachers. We **HAVE** fairly paid teachers who decide it's still not enough, even in a tough economic time. It's time for a positive change in Pennsylvania, one that puts our **CHILDREN** and our **FAMILIES** first!

Sincerely,

Dean Iampietro
Bethel Park, PA

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Langhorne, PA 19047

RE: House Bill 1369

To the PA House Education Committee:

We, as a family, would like to strongly urge you to pass Bill 1369 and prevent Pennsylvania's teachers from striking.

Our teacher's union is much too powerful when they are permitted to essentially take adult disputes out on children, be it in the form of a "work to contract" or a strike. If the union will not impose that standard of morality and integrity on themselves then the state must do it for them. Children should not be used as pawns under any circumstances.

We are Neshaminy residents and our eldest child suffered a lot last fall during the work to the contract. He is a sensitive child, with some learning issues and an IEP. We, under the advice of our developmental pediatrician and a PhD level psychologist switched his ADD meds to one with anti depressant qualities, (from one without but that was working well). Our child had a very difficult fall, and then developed an ulcer as a direct result of the medication change. That should never have happened. He also missed out on the High School student tutoring he usually received one day a week after school because there was no faculty advisor due to it being "something extra" that the teachers don't contractually have to do. While we loved his teacher and greatly respected her, we could not ask her to go against a very powerful union, even to benefit our child. It was truly a no win situation. His ulcer is now healed. Needless to say, this child is attending private school this year. We will not put him back in that situation.

We loved our local school, and this is year 6 of our having a student in it. (our younger children remain there because of the financial impossibility of private school tuition for 3) The WTC and threat of strike shocked us and changed how we "look" at our local school. I drove my Kindergartener through a picket line for her K orientation on Monday. That was not appropriate for a 5 yr old child. She did not understand and I did not want to explain it to her. I cannot imagine how I will explain a strike if it comes to that. She is also a child with some special "needs" and an unexpected disruption to her routine for weeks will be very detrimental to her comfort and security level at a totally new school with all new people.

I personally believe the WTC is a working strike and as bad, if not worse, than a "standard" strike, and would encourage you to look into that. Children should not have to give up holiday breaks, and the family time they allow, due to a strike over issues they cannot control and have no voice in. To use the children to leverage the parents, and therefore the school board to get what they want is utterly disgraceful and I am sure weighs heavily on many of our better educator's consciences. I actually supported several

of the teacher's positions and requests (my own degree is in secondary education) until their actions hurt my child...how can I support them now? My opinion changed 180 degrees very rapidly...and they declared that WTC action, which hurt my child, a "success". That was the worst of it all.

Please pass this bill and insure that no child in Pennsylvania will ever be hurt by a strike, however "successful" the outcome of such a strike may be for anyone.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

I would prefer you not make public our last names for fear of repercussions on the children we have who are still in Neshaminy schools. This union is intense. Legislators are free to have it and may contact us if they wish to for any reason.