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Testimony State House Education Committee August 25th 2011

Chairman Clymer, Chairman Roebuck, Members of the Committee. I would like to start my testimony by first complementing the bill sponsors particularly Representative Rock and Metcalf. As a member of this community I speak for many in expressing our gratitude for your efforts. I would also like to thank My Local House Representative Frank Ferry for helping to secure this important session here in the Great School District of Neshaminy.

There have heard a lot of speakers on this topic and I would prefer not to repeat the legal justification that has already been addressed. I would like to approach this from the perspective of an active parent running for School Board that has young child in 1st grade at Pearl Buck Elementary School. The use of strikes as a weapon by teachers unions is a heartless action against parents and more importantly children. Currently in our district we are heading towards a second Work to Contract action and in the views of some they consider this a work slowdown or a strike. By the definition of a strike in the State of PA they may be right. What bothers me and most of the community members that I speak with, particularly parents, is the willingness to use the emotional bond of a teacher with their students parents as a means to gain increased wages and benefits in what many consider the most difficult economy since the great depression. Parents in PA and especially in Neshaminy come from a diverse economic background and to think that a family struggling to make ends meet with dual incomes would be forced to pay for childcare or worse yet one of the parents having to stay home would be unacceptable. The Teacher's union in our district just cannot comprehend that people are suffering the effects of this economy like no other times in the history of our great nation. These are the people you represent. This is why you must pass this legislation this year when you return. I want to give you a taste of one member of the Neshaminy Federations of Teachers attitude towards a possible strike. A prominent teacher stood up in front of a public session of the School board with 300 or so members in attendance telling people that strikes are "not that bad". She relayed a story

about when she attended Neshaminy back in the 90's when an unprecedented strike hit our community prior to the current legislation that went on for weeks at a time. She indicated that she went to Sesame place and turned into an honors student and went on to college and then a teacher. So in essence her view was that "strikes are not that harmful to students look at me I turned out just fine". I was appalled at the lack of understanding of the broader community and the harm that come to parents and students affected by strikes. Children must not be used as pawns to seek collective bargaining results. It is unacceptable in any manner in my opinion.

I am not a lawyer but I understand the basic rights as granted to me by our Constitution. The right to strike does not supersede the right of our children to receive an uninterrupted education. The State is obligated in this manner and must act now to insure that children are protected from this vile form of intimidation and leverage. It is time for this legislature to act for parents to insure that the necessary legal pendulum swings back in their favor as opposed to the current situation that favors big teacher unions in this state. Yes they are organized and yes they have a lot of PAC money and some of you may take that money. But we are the people and the people want this to end now and we are looking to you to do what is right by our children and stop this behavior.

I want to point out that unlike other states that have enacted real collective bargaining reform like Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, Tennessee and Florida Pennsylvania is taking an incremental approach to reforming out dated education legislation. I do not agree with incremental approaches and suggest that you as well as the governor start leading and do what we sent you to Harrisburg to do... Fix the broken education system that our state currently suffers with I would point out that there is significant evidence coming out of Wisconsin, where collective bargaining has been significantly curtailed, that school districts are finally able to afford the necessary investments in technology, building repairs, curriculum development and the necessary training in new educational practices. . This legislation, however not only protects children but it has the necessary elements to insure that educators are protected with collective bargaining in this state in an open and transparent way. 37 states in the U.S. have already outlawed teachers' strikes. PA leads the nation in both the number of strikes per year and

the number of impacted students. This state has self imposed leadership on areas that do not attract business and jobs. WE do not attract business because of labor work rules that are unmanageable and anti business. If we are going to grow this state we have to stop the bleeding and make it more attractive to business and one of the keys is quality education. Strikes are not a tool to improve education they are destructive by their very nature. I applaud the writers of this bill because it takes into account not only the impact of stopping strikes on children, but insuring that the professional staff has the necessary protection that will help them get a fair contract that the district can afford. I would ask that you double your efforts to pass this important legislation this year. Children need to be kept out of this and it will be up to you to make that happen. Thanks for your time and for allowing me the honor to testify over this important legislation.