2020 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Education Support Professionals Bill of Rights

Everyone who works in public education deserves the same things. Respect for their contribution to the care and education of our students. Fair compensation for their work, including affordable health care. Safe working conditions.

Unfortunately, most education support professionals (ESPs) across Minnesota don’t get enough of any of those. They are the first people students see in the morning and the last adults they see when they leave in the afternoon. But thousands of ESPs don’t have enough left in their paychecks after deducting for health insurance to pay for a week of groceries, much less daycare. Many are told to supervise far too many students at one time.

We need to start treating ESPs like the professionals they are and give them the respect they deserve. Education Minnesota supports the following legislative proposals to improve pay and benefits for ESPs and elevate their voice in decisions on staffing levels and working conditions:

• Require school districts and charter schools to pay their ESPs a living wage. Every school employee should have the right to spend time at home with her or his own children, without working two or three extra jobs to survive.

• Help educators and their families get quality, affordable health care by allowing any Minnesotan to buy into MinnesotaCare and supporting an innovative, cost-sharing initiative called the Educator Health Care Initiative. This proposal:
  • Establishes minimum levels of cost-sharing between the district and employee for health care based on national averages.
  • Gives districts that meet or have a plan to meet these minimum levels financial assistance.

• Provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.

• Establish reporting and transparency requirements to identify issues of concern for ESPs on the worksite. This could include staffing levels, pay scale, safety, fair scheduling, etc.

• Require paraprofessionals who work directly with students to receive 16 hours of paid training prior to the beginning of each school year.

Updated: Jan. 15, 2020

www.educationminnesota.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.