

United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Winslow Township School District Exploits Paraprofessionals through Private Contractor

The contractor, ESS, and the School District both claim they are not accountable for Winslow paraprofessional wage increases and benefits

April 13, 2020

Winslow Township, NJ – The paraprofessionals who work for the Winslow Township School District organized a union in the fall of 2019 because they are paid low wages, have no benefits, and are not treated with respect. The Winslow Teacher Assistants, Non-Instructional Assistants, Bus Aides, and Before and After School Program Attendants work for a contractor named ESS Support Services. The newly-organized paraprofessional union local has been in negotiations with the school district contractor since October 2019, but both the contractor and the school district insist that the other party is responsible for the paraprofessionals' wages and benefits.

The Winslow Township School District contracted out its paraprofessionals approximately ten years ago. When they were privatized, the staff immediately lost their benefits, pensions, paid time off, and their wages were slashed. After ten years of poverty wages and no benefits, the paraprofessionals decided to organize a union with the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) last year. The paraprofessionals, who are now UE Local 119, have been in negotiations with the Winslow contractor for six months.

On April 1st, the paraprofessionals believed that they had finally come to a union contract settlement with ESS. However, the contractor subsequently insisted that most of the financial agreements were dependent upon the Winslow School District providing the funding for the union's contract with ESS. Yet, at the same time, the Winslow School District claims that it is not the employer of the subcontracted paraprofessionals, and so it refuses to discuss negotiations with the union.

Winslow ESS Teacher Assistant and UE Local 119 bargaining committee member Sheila Wanzer said, "ESS and Winslow Township School District are partners in paying slave wages to their paraprofessionals. They force the workers into poverty and do everything to keep us in poverty. The actions of ESS and the school district towards the workers are shameful. We work in the classrooms alongside Winslow teachers every day, but we are treated like second class citizens. We have no health insurance or paid time off, while the other school staff have better pay and good benefits. We work with students with disabilities and behavior disorders, and our jobs can often be stressful and dangerous. The buck passing between Winslow and ESS needs to stop."

About the UE

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) is a national labor union with tens of thousands of members. UE members work in a number of different industries, including manufacturing, machining, driving, service industries, and government. UE Local 119 represents approximately 200 paraprofessionals working for ESS at the Winslow School District. The UE's website is listed below.

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