

Ohio Federation of Teachers Paraprofessionals, School Related Personnel and
School Health Care Providers Committee

WORK SHOULDN'T HURT - SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL

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WHEREAS, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, secretaries and all school staff operate at a heightened level of vigilance to guarantee their and their students' safety, and

WHEREAS, school staff are, at times, required to intervene in situations where students and staff may be at risk of harm or injury from a student's uncontrolled behavior, and

WHEREAS, the Oregon School Employees Association has received a significant uptick in reports of serious and career-ending injuries among its members who support behaviorally challenged students, and

WHEREAS, OSEA has launched a campaign to end these preventable and tragic incidents, beginning with a published series of articles, "Work Shouldn't Hurt," that documented sobering case studies; OSEA leaders and members took these reports to the governor and other policymakers, and

WHEREAS, the Oregon experience is far from unique. Ohio Federation of Teachers affiliates have reported increased rates of work-related assaults among special education paraprofessionals and assistants. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that public school teaching assistants have a high rate of work-related injuries that result in lost work days, and

WHEREAS, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found in a statewide Pennsylvania education study that special education paraprofessionals, assistants and teachers had the highest rate of work-related assaults and associated injuries, and

WHEREAS, a study of 8,000 school staff workers' compensation claims in Minnesota reported that special education assistants and teachers were at high risk of being injured and requiring medical care and workers' compensation, and

WHEREAS, special education assistants were most at risk for "student-related injuries" and had the highest workers' compensation claims rate (five for every 100 full-time employees) for such injuries, compared with all other school personnel; and

WHEREAS, special education staff are at risk not only for physical injuries but also for lingering and long-term post-traumatic stress disorders, and

WHEREAS, school districts across the country have failed to systematically and adequately address the issue. For example, OSEA has documented a mixed record among Oregon school districts of recording incidents, providing protective equipment and adequate de-escalation and restraint training for at-risk personnel, and assessing the placement needs of special education students, THEREFORE:

RESOLVED, that the Ohio Federation of Teachers(OFT) will continue to assist affiliates in developing campaigns that will assess the prevalence of assaults and related injuries, significantly improve district policy and practice, and educate members on steps to protect themselves and students as well as support injured members; and

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46 BE IT RESOLVED, that the OFT will develop and disseminate leadership for both new and current
47 members training modules for affiliates to both educate about the problem and advocate for
48 appropriate professional development on preventing injuries, and

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50 BE IT RESOLVED, that the OFT will work with affiliates and education organizations to identify the best
51 evidence-based staff training programs for supporting students who are behaviorally challenged, and

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53 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the OFT will advocate for comprehensive Occupational Safety and Health
54 Administration training.