

**Prepared Testimony of Lynn Radcliffe**  
**Special Education Support Staff, Cleveland Metropolitan School District**  
**SEIU District 1199 Member**  
**Cleveland, Ohio**

My name is Lynn Radcliffe and it is an honor to testify before you today as a local school district employee and as a proud member of SEIU District 1199. I am a support staff person in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, one of two people working in the Office of Advocacy and Compliance, Division of Special Education.

My supervisor and I are part of a team of people who advocate for and with the parents of special needs students and other students as well. Just this school year, my supervisor and I have handled and resolved more than 90 cases, many of them without the use of in-house or contracted-out legal counsel. Neither my supervisor nor I are attorneys. We just know what the laws are and what the rights are for the students and their parents. What we do behind the scenes every day – quietly and without fanfare or headlines – saves the Cleveland schools hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

I oppose the anti-collective bargaining legislation introduced in my home state, known now as Senate Bill 5, first and foremost because this bill will destroy the basic employment rights of dedicated state and local workers like me who provide services to the citizens of Ohio and who have negotiated working condition protections through collective bargaining. By severely restricting our collective bargaining rights, this legislation will give employers an upper hand that I believe will bring back the days of cronyism, unfair treatment and downright abuse.

Forty-three years ago, a group of sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, stood up to the politicians of their day and said enough is enough. They were tired of being treated as less than, disrespected and economically deprived of earning a decent wage to take care of their families. Along with Dr. King and an entire movement, they won the rights that public employees are protected by today.

Sadly, forty-three years later, here we are facing the same type of treatment as the Memphis sanitation workers. I will not sit by quietly and watch the successes of those who came before us be taken away. Today's politicians are systematically and purposefully intent on destroying our unions by trying to shove severe restrictions on collective bargaining into law. They argue that it's a matter of economic necessity but I am here to tell you that it's a matter of economic tomfoolery.

Public employees in Ohio have taken pay cuts, forgone step increases, forgone longevity payments, taken furlough days, increased the amount we pay for monthly health care premiums, and increased the amount we pay for doctor visits. This was all accomplished through collective bargaining. Both sides sat down together and reached a mutual agreement.

We understand and we understand when our employers in state and local governments are facing a financial crisis -- and we have done our part to close those budget deficits. We've

also adapted to the challenge of working with less staff and less financial resources, while still providing the quality services that the citizens of Ohio are entitled to, deserve and need.

Politicians are making these attacks on our collective bargaining while also giving tax breaks to big business and doing a whole lot of nothing on a comprehensive plan to create jobs. Their dismissive attitudes and actions toward us tell me that working people don't matter to the politicians who support this kind of legislation, in Ohio or anywhere.

As your public servants and as your fellow taxpayers, we are here today to plead with you not to allow elected officials at any level to take the focus away from what really matters to the people of Ohio: creating good jobs, jobs that allow people to make a livable wage to take care of our families, and jobs where we are treated with dignity and respect. We are here to plead with you not to let anyone destroy what remains of the working class, and we pledge that we will work side by side with you to reweave the sturdy economic fabric of Ohio and our great country.