



— STATE COMPTROLLER —
SEAN SCANLON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 5, 2023

COMPTROLLER SEAN SCANLON, GOVERNOR LAMONT, SPEAKER MATT RITTER ANNOUNCE HEALTHCARE ASSISTANCE FOR PARAEDUCATORS

(HARTFORD, CT) – Comptroller Sean Scanlon, Governor Lamont, House Speaker Matt Ritter, Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker, and labor union representatives today announced the Paraeducator Healthcare Subsidy Program, which will devote \$5 million to providing financial assistance for paraeducators’ healthcare costs. This program was created through negotiations between legislative leadership and labor unions during the 2023 legislative session and signed into law in the Governor’s 2023-2024 biennium budget.

Paraeducators play a vital role in school ecosystems, providing direct support to both teachers and students. Paraeducators enrolled in a high deductible health plan with a health savings account who are employed by a local or regional school district are eligible for this one-time stipend. The Office of the State Comptroller expects payments to go out in September to more than 4,000 paraeducators.

Comptroller Sean Scanlon said, “We can never show enough appreciation for those who work in our schools with our children, and our paraeducators have played an increasingly important role helping to combat learning loss from the pandemic. Amid rising healthcare costs and general inflation, my office is working collaboratively to get this much needed relief to paraeducators as just one way of thanking them for all they do.”

Governor Ned Lamont said, “Day in and day out, Connecticut’s paraeducators provide a vital role supporting our students’ academic success and their overall well-being. I’ve heard from many paraeducators that low pay, and increasing healthcare costs, are driving them out of the classroom. They deserve our upmost respect and that starts with better access to health care. This program will provide temporary support to reduce the cost of health care as we continue the work to identify long-term solutions to reduce the cost of care.”

Speaker of the House Matt Ritter said, “With the launch of the Paraeducator Health Subsidy Program, thousands of paraeducators across the state will have access to quality healthcare. I am very proud of the leadership role my office played in appropriating these funds, and we will

continue to work with paraeducators to ensure that they have the support they need to do the great work they do.”

Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner Russell-Tucker said, “Our paraeducators are an integral part of the education system. Paraeducators work closely with teachers and other professionals to provide critical supports to our students with unique and diverse needs—from instructional lessons to social-emotional development. With staffing vacancies still very much front of mind at the Department, I want to thank the Governor and legislature for committing funds to provide financial assistance for paraeducators’ healthcare costs and the Comptroller for implementing this very important program.”

State Senator Douglas McCrory, Senate Chair of the Education Committee, said, “I’m so pleased that this program is in effect, helping to make healthcare more accessible for our paraeducators. These professionals are critical in our classrooms, and we must continue to ensure that they receive proper compensation and benefits. I am thankful to Comptroller Sean Scanlon for working to provide affordable and quality healthcare for Connecticut residents.”

State Representative Jeff Currey, House Chair of the Education Committee, said, “This is an important step to address the painful gap between high-deductible health plans and the low wages for paraeducators, so I am thankful to Speaker Ritter and our Policy Director Tim Bergin for their efforts to secure the funding for the subsidy. My deep appreciation also to Comptroller Scanlon and his staff for administering the fund, which gives something vital to paraeducators, who play a critical role in our educational system.”

Shellye Davis, President of the Hartford Federation of Paraeducators, AFT Local 2221 and Divisional Vice President for paraprofessionals and school-related personnel with AFT Connecticut, said, “The stipend for paraeducators to help reduce our healthcare costs is a long-overdue step toward improving recruitment and retention. By itself it won’t solve the crisis; but, if combined with additional resources to lift paras out of poverty, it will make a difference.”

Cynthia Ross-Zweig, President of the CSEA SEIU Local 2001 Paraeducators Council, said, “Inadequate healthcare is a huge obstacle for paras, with deductibles that cost so much that, in some cases, it would take us over 300 hours of work just to pay off. And there’s no question the impact that low hourly wages and inadequate healthcare coverage have on turnover, and thus directly impacts student outcomes. Today’s announcement is much-welcomed relief for Connecticut’s paraeducators.”

###

Contact: Madi Csejka
Press Secretary
madi.csejka@ct.gov
C: 203-506-0191

osc.ct.gov