



# MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Monday August 12, 2019

## **Upper Canada District School Board Cuts to Mental Health Support Staff Could Spell Danger for 27,000 students**

The Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) issued layoff notices to 25 para-professional employees this past June. At the most recent board meeting, the Upper Canada District School Board approved a 1.3 million dollar decrease in funding for Para-Professionals. These professionals include child and youth workers and behaviourists (Student Support Partners). All these positions were eliminated. Front-line services critical in student suicide prevention, student mental health, student engagement strategies, and facilitating connections between families and outside agencies to support students have all been decimated.

These layoffs represent a 53% cut in Para-Professionals to the UCDSB.

“Student with mental health and behaviour concerns could be left stranded,” said Jim Mulville, Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) Bargaining Unit President in District 26 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF/FEESO). “With the provincial priorities around violence in schools and the rise of student mental health crises, why would trustees pull all dedicated para-professional support? Safety and behaviour plans that keep students and staff safe, and the hard work put into creating relationships with students at risk – no one can step in and seamlessly do this work.”

It seems like the public agrees, as over 2000 people have voiced their support, petitioning the school board to reconsider their decision and reinstate these needed mental health and behavior-dedicated positions.

In a recent news announcement, Steve Clark, MPP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes agreed that recent cuts at this school board are troubling, to say the least. “This could be horrific for students, parents and our communities,” said Shelley Bulloch, Vice President of the Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) Bargaining Unit President in District 26 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF/FEESO). “Our most fragile of kids will be shattered come September if nothing is done to correct this devastating mistake.”

Members of the public can voice their concerns by directing emailing the Chair of Trustees at the UCDSB at [john.mcallister@ucdsb.on.ca](mailto:john.mcallister@ucdsb.on.ca) and by signing the petition at <http://chnq.it/Rn58xjQz47>.

*OSSTF/FEESO District 26 represents Teachers, Occasional Teachers and Professional Student Services Personnel at the Upper Canada District School Board.*

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