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Macias, Wendy

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2009 10:34 PM
To: negreg09
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Testimony re: Hearing for Issues under Negotiated Rulemaking.
Attachments: Statement_-_L.Trerotola_FINAL_DRAFT.doc

Dear Sir or Madam, I have attached my written testimony for the negotiated rulemaking hearings.

[REDACTED]

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 22, 2009 4:51:02 PM
Subject: Statements to be sent to DOE

Hello [REDACTED]

I've attached the statement that you should email to the Department of Education. Please follow the instructions below. Note that **the Department of Education must receive this email from you by noon tomorrow.** It is very important that the Department receives your email because your experience can help influence the regulations that will be passed. If favorable regulations are passed, we will be able to more easily find a solution to address your case.

1. Please email your statement to: negreg09@ed.gov
2. In the Cc Line, please include [REDACTED] and I: [REDACTED]
3. In the SUBJECT LINE of the email, please copy this: **Testimony re: Hearing for Issues under Negotiated Rulemaking.**
4. Please attach the statement. If you are unsure how to do this, feel free to call me.
5. In the Body of the Email please write this:

Dear Sir or Madam, I have attached my written testimony for the negotiated rulemaking hearings.

[REDACTED] if you have any questions at all, please do call me. I will be in the office from 9:30am tomorrow on. It is very important that we send this out by tomorrow morning.

Thanks so much!

[REDACTED]
Legal Aid Foundation Los Angeles

[REDACTED]



Statement

I saw a television ad about Bryman College's dental assistant program sometime during December 2005. At the time, I had just been laid off from my job of 17 years, where I was making \$17/hr. As a single mother of two, I wanted to improve my ability to provide for my children. I knew that Bryman College (now renamed Everest College) was a multi-million dollar company that could afford to run television ads all the time, so I believed that they were also able to provide a quality education. I called the 1-800 number advertised in the commercial and left a message with my contact information. From how the commercial sounded, I was sure participating in the program would result in a career.

I received a call back from an admission representative and I scheduled an appointment to go and see the Gardena campus. When I meet with the admissions representative (AR), I was still undecided about joining the program. However, the AR told me that there was a high demand for dental assistants and that after I graduated I would be making a good salary. She told me that the best thing about graduating from Bryman was there were so many jobs out there and that Bryman had so many connections with employers that it would be easy to place me in a job after graduating. Based on what the AR said about the many available dental jobs and Bryman's many job contacts, I felt sure I would get a good paying job if I finished this program. The AR also told me that they had very well trained and professional teachers for this program who were all registered dental assistants (RDAs). She informed me that the teacher who would be teaching the program was really nice and experienced.

The AR introduced me to the president of the Bryman campus, Mr. [REDACTED] and Mrs. [REDACTED], the supervisor for the dental program. They were both very nice and welcoming. I was then given an entrance exam. It was very simple, covering basic math and English and didn't take that long. They let me know right away that I passed the exam and qualified for the program. I was scheduled to attend an orientation session about a week later.

At the orientation session, Mr. [REDACTED] spoke and introduced the various staff members of school and talked about class schedules and rules. The staff all made the idea of working as a dental assistant sound exciting and promised that we could make a career out of it. They told me I would have a good job, a bright future, and would always have employed if I finished the program. I was told that some dental assistants even made up to \$40/hour. I felt very hopeful about the doors this training would open for me. There were about 20 other students in the orientation and they all were younger than me. But,

we were all excited about the job opportunities that would be open to us after we completed this program.

During orientation, students met with the financial aid staff individually. I was rushed very quickly through a stack of paperwork and signed everything they told me to sign. I was not given an opportunity to read the documents I was signing. I didn't understand everything I signed, but I didn't feel nervous about taking out these loans to pay for the course because the staff members kept telling me that I would be making good money and I assumed that I would have no problem making the monthly loan payments with the starting pay I would receive from my dental job after graduation.

I started the dental assisting program on January 13, 2006 at the Gardena campus, [REDACTED] Ms. [REDACTED] was my teacher for all my classes. In the beginning, I did not know what to expect because I have no college experience that I could compare the dental course with. After a few weeks, it was apparent that Ms. [REDACTED] wasn't really teaching us the course material and I was not learning much from her instruction. . She would spend an incredible amount of class time texting or chatting on her cell phone and talking with the students about her personal life. I would say that a majority of the time she wasn't teaching us at all or even doing teaching related tasks. She would instead talk about her sex life or share inappropriate and personal stories with the students or just text and chat on her phone.

When she was supposed to demonstrate a technique or skill for us, she would do a quick demonstration and then return to talking on the phone or with students in the class. We spent a lot of time in class reading the book and trying to figure out how to do things ourselves. If any of us had a question, she would take a long time to finish whatever conversation she was engaged in before coming over to address it. Most of the time, when a student asked a question, she would reply that she didn't know and told the student to just check in the textbook. I felt that I was mostly learning from a classmate who had a background in science. He would end up answering all our questions to the best of his ability, even though he was just a student in the class like me.

It became very apparent to all of the class members that [REDACTED] was an incompetent teacher when we had substitute instructors come in to teach when she was absent. Usually our substitute instructor would be either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] who was the supervisor for the program. The first time [REDACTED] substituted, I was really surprised because she spent most of the class actually teaching and lecturing and doing demonstrations of procedures. [REDACTED] would usually do a demonstration only once and then we would have to figure it out and practice on our own.

For example, during the orthodontics module, [REDACTED] rushed through the demonstration of how to put on wires, talking very fast the whole time. We then had to spend the rest of the class figuring out how to do it on our own and it was very difficult. [REDACTED] would hardly ever watch us practice the techniques after her speedy demonstrations and we would struggle to figure it out on her own without any additional direction. In contrast, [REDACTED] would show us a demonstration over and over again

if we didn't understand it. She would then observe and help us individually while we practiced.

Also, whenever [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] substituted, we would actually get a lecture. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would stand in front of the class and lecture on the subject of the particular module, sometimes using visual aids such as slides to help us learn. This was especially important for lessons like cranial anatomy. Comparably, [REDACTED] did not often lecture. She would instead write long passages on the chalkboard and we would have to copy them down in our notebooks. We found out that often these passages were directly out of the textbooks we had. Also, the substitutes would give us homework to do. We never had any homework assignments from [REDACTED] we didn't even know that we were supposed be getting homework assignments.

The situation became worse as the program progressed. [REDACTED] began coming to the class smelling of alcohol. She would leave the classroom for up to 20 minutes at a time. We found out that she kept a bottle of wine in the one of the classroom closets. She would smell of alcohol most of the time. Students would fall asleep in the class or mess around, but she didn't notice or care. She admitted openly to students that she was an alcoholic, but claimed that she "got it together."

My classes were scheduled to run from 1:00pm to 4:45pm on weekdays. [REDACTED] would usually dismiss the class and leave around 4:30pm. However, on many days she would announce early on that she was tired and didn't feel like teaching, suggesting to us that we needed to use the book and teach ourselves. She would then allow anyone who wanted to go home early to just leave. Those of us who stayed would then be forced to form study groups and teach ourselves for the rest of the day. I always stayed because I took the program very seriously and wanted to get the best education I could out of it.

Many of us in the class were becoming extremely frustrated. We began complaining in the instructor surveys that were given every month or so, but that didn't seem to cause any kind of reaction from the school. They may not have even looked at them. Around my third month into the program, another student in my class complained directly to [REDACTED] about our instructor. This student had started the program before me and was finishing up the subjects (modules) she hadn't taken yet. The school held a meeting with the student, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] the supervisor of the program.

We thought that after this meeting, the class would get a new instructor and things would change for the better. We were very disappointed to see the school took no corrective actions. Instead, [REDACTED] began retaliating against the student that had made the complaints by totally ignoring the student. [REDACTED] would not answer her questions nor give her any assistance in preparing for upcoming exams.

I personally complained to our substitute, [REDACTED], a little while after this. I explained how frustrated I was feeling with [REDACTED] lack of teaching ability, inappropriate behavior in class, and constant smell of alcohol. [REDACTED] suggested that I write an anonymous letter and drop it off at the front office. I was afraid I would be

identified by the staff if I dropped off such a letter and that [REDACTED] would find out, so I didn't. I did not want to be retaliated against like the other student who had complained.

About eight months into the program, I finally got the courage to write a letter to the school's President, [REDACTED]. I sent him an email detailing the complaints I had about [REDACTED] and asking him to handle the situation with discretion, since I would still be attending her classes for another month. The email I wrote resulted in an investigation into Ms. W_____ and after a few weeks, [REDACTED] was fired. I heard from other students still in the program after I graduated that the new teacher was really good and that they were all learning the things they were supposed to.

Despite the poor education I was receiving from [REDACTED], I still believed that if I successfully graduated from the dental assisting program, I would get a well-paying job. I first became nervous that about my career prospects towards the end of my program, when a former classmate who had completed the program earlier in the year came back to visit and told several of the students that she was only making \$9/hour. She said that she was told she would have to work for many years before she could expect a raise. Some of the students, including me, were concerned after hearing this and we brought it up to [REDACTED] in class. [REDACTED] assured us that we would be making more than \$9/hour and would have a good job after the program. She told us about her former student who was making \$17/hour as a dental assistant. She also said that we would have no problems paying off our student loans with the salaries we would earn as dental assistants.

I really cared about succeeding in the program because this was supposed to provide me with a good career so that I could better my life and my children's lives. I maintained perfect attendance throughout the program and got excellent grades (nearly 100% in every subject). I got many attendance and achievement certificates.

After classes ended, I started my externship in September 2006, which would have hopefully resulted in a job offer. I found my externship placement on my own through my neighbor, who happened to be a dentist and said I could come extern at his office. The dental office I worked for was really disappointed in how unprepared I was. The staff and dentists would ask me why I didn't understand basic things that should have been taught to me already in school. For example, I didn't know how the basic methods to assist the dentist while he worked on a patient. I also found out I was taught incorrect techniques. For instance, I was told by staff at the dental office that the methods I learned for applying sedatives and mixing cement was wrong. They suggested I go back to school and re-take the classes. I would go home from my externship so depressed and would sometimes cry myself to sleep. The office manager there finally explained to me after a few weeks that I was unprepared to work as a dental assistant and that I could finish my externship hours, but that I would not be hired to work there.

I asked for a meeting with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I explained what happened at my extern site and told them that I did not receive proper instruction under [REDACTED]

I was unable to successfully work as a dental assistant even though I had regularly attended and excelled in my classes. Their response what that what happened with [REDACTED] was unfortunate, but that they have taken care of the problem by firing her. But they knew there was a problem long before they finally fired her because of the surveys and the various complaints made. Certainly, [REDACTED] knew there was a problem but did not do anything about it. As for me, I would still have to pay for the education I did not receive. The only option they offered me was to retake the course. I tried to explain to them that retaking the course was not possible for me because I had children to feed and had already been on unemployment for most of the year to participate in the program. I had no way of supporting myself while I took the course again. I told them that I should have been properly trained when I first went through the program and that now I was behind in my rent, car payments, and I needed to work badly.

I went to work full-time for a different branch of the same dental company I externed at, but the staff there soon found me unable to do most of the techniques necessary to assist the doctor. They reduced me to part-time and I was only allowed to sterilize the instruments and clean the floor. I was humiliated and depressed. I did everything I was supposed to do in school and thought I would graduate and be successful in this new career. The total cost of my education was nearly \$12,000. I was not given a diploma because I still have outstanding cash payments owed to [REDACTED]. I owe over \$10,000 in student loans I cannot pay. I have about run out of my deferments but still cannot make the minimum payments on the loans. I was hoping to make a better future for myself and my children, but today I feel like I have failed as a mother for not being able to provide.

[REDACTED]