

Testimony:

My name is Lauralea Curavoo and I am currently a kindergarten teacher at Barre Town Middle and Elementary School. This is my 20th year teaching in public schools and my 19th year teaching kindergarten. I started teaching at Bridport Central school in Bridport, Vt where I worked for 12 years before moving to central VT and working at Barre Town. I'm a single mom and I love teaching.

Last spring I was offered a letter of intent by my school district, which I was required to sign and return by April 15, just before our spring break, if I wanted to keep my position at Barre Town. I enjoy working at Barre Town and wasn't looking for another position anywhere else so I returned my signed letter with the intent of working the next school year.

The week after April break, 11 days after I signed the letter of intent, I was made aware of an open position similar to my current one that was in the district I live in and in the same district that my son goes to school in. If I had this position it would allow me to bring my son to school each morning and work on the same schedule he would follow. I'd also get a substantial raise.

That week I wrote an email to my superintendent requesting an extension on my letter of intent to allow me to pursue this position. He didn't respond to my initial email and so a week later I wrote another letter with more details, again requesting an extension and stating the reasons I told you earlier. He replied to my second request saying that he could not honor my request citing the article in our contract where I needed to request an extension prior to April 15. At that point I reached out to my building NEA reps. I also applied for the position because I didn't want to miss the window of opportunity in case I was granted permission.

I asked my Superintendent for clarification around the language of letter of intent versus contract and my superintendent at the time said he considered my letter of intent to be my agreement to teach for the next year, although we had no contract in place and didn't have hopes of settling before the next school year. He also quoted the Vermont state law that talked about the consequence for breaking contract which said that if I break my contract without just cause then I'd be disqualified to teach in any public school for the remainder of the school year. He said that he understood my desire to work in my son's district and that it's something I might want to explore at a future time after I'd asked for an extension. So this was in May and I was already committed to have to teach at Barre Town beginning in September and through the school year or not teach in Vermont at all for a year.

The school that I was interested in applying to continued to encourage me to go through the process. They knew my status with my current school but we're hopeful that we find a way to work through it if I was the right fit for their school. I applied, interviewed, did a classroom lesson, and was moved forward by the school committee to their superintendent. I had an interview with their superintendent and he offered me the job with the understanding that I'd have to be released from my letter of intent. The other superintendent called the Barre Town superintendent to ask for permission for me to be released from my letter of intent and my

superintendent denied it of course. I reached out to my superintendent one last time at the beginning of June, pleading that he allow me to be released from my letter of intent and talking about the benefits to my family but he responded with a reprimand. He told me that because I had interviewed with another district despite being told I was not released from my contract he directed me to meet with him and suggested I bring representation from the association.

I met with my superintendent as he directed me too and he told me that he was not going to put a letter in my permanent file but that he would mail me a letter that reminded me if I chose to sign a contract while currently under contract with Barre town then he would report me to the state and I would lose my teaching license for a year. The superintendent from the other school district would not offer me a contract while I was under a letter of intent and therefore I was not able to take advantage of this opportunity. I felt very trapped in my job at that point and super frustrated that I had to make a decision about my career 4 months before I started the new school year.