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CONTACT: Monique LeNoir
Director of Communications
Phone: (202) 293-8620

WASHINGTON TEACHERS' UNION TODAY ANNOUNCES ARBITRATION WIN IN CASE INVOLVING AN ACCOMPLISHED DISABLED TEACHER WHO WAS UNFAIRLY TERMINATED BY DCPS

Washington, DC – The Washington Teachers' Union today announced that it has won the case involving a well-loved and accomplished blind teacher, Denise Hamilton, who dedicated her career to teaching special education students, particularly those with vision impairments. Arbitrator Paul Greenberg ruled that Ms. Hamilton was wrongfully terminated by DC Public Schools (DCPS) in 2008 for allegedly lacking certification just days before she was mailed her permanent certification.

DCPS had promised Ms. Hamilton, if she took certain steps on a particular schedule to obtain her permanent license, she would not be fired. Then, by way of a mass mailed form-letter, DCPS went back on its word and fired her after she had met all the certification requirements and had submitted all of her documents to the proper authority. When the WTU brought these facts to DCPS' attention and proved that this teacher was certified to teach in the District through 2013, DCPS did not correct the problem. Instead, they chose—at great expense to the taxpayers of the District of Columbia, Ms. Hamilton, and her students—to fight the Union at every turn. DCPS rebuffed the Union's efforts to resolve the matter amicably, so the WTU kept fighting on Ms. Hamilton's behalf and won the case.

During the press conference, Denise Hamilton spoke about the hardships she endured as a result of being unfairly terminated by DCPS. "Faith got me through the difficult times, and I look forward to returning to the classroom and most importantly, my students," said Ms. Hamilton. "My hope is that I will be respected, appreciated and accepted by DCPS this time around."

DCPS has been ordered to restore Hamilton's job and pay her full back pay. In reaching his conclusion, Arbitrator Greenberg said that instead of fixing the situation promptly and correcting a personnel action that it surely realized would not be sustained if judged on the merits, DCPS invested several years and substantial taxpayer funds defending its decision to terminate Ms. Hamilton.

"In the end, we are happy to say that the DCPS students, particularly, those who are visually impaired, will once again have access to a really great teacher," stated WTU President Nathan Saunders. "There is no reason whatsoever that the District should spend millions of dollars transporting visually impaired students to the School for the Blind in Maryland, when Ms. Hamilton was ready, willing and able to teach. We can only hope that DCPS will accept this decision without spending any more tax dollars fighting a losing battle."