

We, the Brockton Paraprofessional Education Association, representing over 500 paraprofessionals and MTA's in the Brockton Massachusetts public school system, support the graduate students at the University of California Santa Cruz on a wildcat strike fighting for a cost of living adjustment (COLA), which began by withholding grades in December 2019 and has now turned into a full blown teaching strike since Monday February 10th 2020.

The fight for a COLA/living wage is both an issue of high education accessibility and of fairness in valuing the educational workers who make their university run. The ever increasing cost of higher education in this country has led to the ballooning of student loan debt to now around \$1.5 Trillion dollars, a burden that is weighing heavily on an entire generation who has delayed homeownership and having children compared to those before them because of the financial strain. Graduate study at the University of California is now only accessible to many first generation and working class students, like many of the kids we work with in Brockton, due to the tuition remission won by UAW 2865. However, the gap between pay and the cost of living has made graduate study inaccessible even with tuition remission. It is a shame that one of the most revered public university systems in the country pays its graduate employees so little that many go homeless and sleep in their car while teaching courses and working on their Master's or PhD.

As paraprofessionals we work directly with the students, in Kindergarten, ESL, Special Education classes, and more. Our work is more than intellectual, it is also emotional. We care for these children day in and day out and support their growth. And for this reason we feel invested in helping fight for a brighter future for our students. We can only hope that when our children graduate high school that we will have won the fight for accessible higher education so that they don't have to struggle also.

We think that the graduate students at UC Santa Cruz are showing to fight for public education. Don't let the administrators making six figure salaries scare you into backing down. Your power is your solidarity, stick together and continue to fight for what is right!

Signed,

*Mrs. Stacy MacDonald*

Stacy MacDonald

Union President BEPA