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I was a paraeducator from 2004-2015 for the public school system. I went to school to get my bachelor's degree and subsequently my master's degree in Special Education in hopes of being a teacher in the public schools that I had supported previously. I became a teacher in the public school system in 2016 and stayed til midyear of 2021-2022. I left for many reasons, but one of the reasons that prolonged my choice to leave was leaving the pay I was given through the public schools.

I had to make a compromise, but it has impacted my family financially. I love what I do and I appreciate that work rarely feels like work, but when my family has to compromise on basic needs to make ends meet, sometimes I know I will have to find a job that feels like work.

My colleagues and I make a great team and we all have the students' best interests in mind. I feel well supported by the staff and I appreciate that the parents are active members of their student's education. I didn't feel this kind of teamwork and support in the public school system and this is so very valuable- and should be acknowledged as such.

Please consider the work of heart we put into supporting students with special needs. We are doing the same work, if not more, as our public school counterparts. Some days I am a behavior specialist, a teacher, a counselor, a friend, and a bonus parent.