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GAE representing member who stood up for herself and colleagues over non-payment for work done.

Georgia Association of Educators' (GAE) member and former bus monitor MaeDell Clark is suing the Floyd County Charter School System for violations of the Georgia Whistleblowers Act after they wrongfully terminated her for her objecting to their actions for allegedly cheating bus monitors out of their fair wages.

Clark, who is retired, but still remains compassionate and caring, spent the last 15 years dutifully serving the children of Floyd County. Most recently in the past decade, she worked as a bus monitor in her capacity as a licensed certified nurse's aide, providing care and supervision to children on the special needs buses. During this time, Clark raised multiple concerns that the bus monitors were not being paid for the time they were working.

To make matters worse, last year, a student who suffered from severe behavioral disorders, attacked Clark on her bus. The altercation left bruising on her entire face and broke her hand. In spite of her injuries, the school district told her that she "had better not file a workers compensation claim" and even tried to demand she stop wearing the hand cast that was allowing her broken hand to heal properly.

Last fall semester, Clark continued to complain that she was still being cheated out of her fair wage and that they were shorting her on her timesheet. As a result, according to Clark, her supervisor called her into the office. Sensing she would be retaliated against, she tape-recorded the conversation. The tape recording indicated that at that meeting her supervisor informed her that they had checked her timesheet and that sure enough her paycheck was short over \$140.50. It also indicated that in the same breath, her supervisor told her "...but because of the budget we are going to have to let you go."

GAE Legal Services Director Mike McGonigle says this is what so often happens with at-will employees. Accountability is ignored. "If they can cheat a bus monitor out of her fair wages and then wrongfully terminate her after she complains, what will happen to teachers who could become at-will employees if Floyd County has its way," he said. McGonigle is referring to that fact that the school district's law firm is arguing that charter systems shouldn't have to follow the Fair Dismissal Act and that they should do away with Fair Dismissal hearings, salary requirements, class size restrictions, and teacher certifications. "Fair Dismissal provides safeguards for dedicated teachers who are being falsely accused, retaliated against, and wrongfully terminated. While Miss Clark is not a teacher, the case is indicative of what happens to at-will employees."

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