



Achieve Hartford!



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March 11, 2014

Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Representative Fleischman and Senator Stillman, and distinguished members of the Education Committee,

In your position reading and listening to hundreds of testimonies on the topic of common core curriculum and assessment, I imagine it makes sense for you to determine exactly what interests drive each person to deliver his/her testimony in order to fully interpret their commentary. As such, let me provide you with the three reasons behind why I'm providing my input:

1. As a parent and resident of CT, I am compelled to support any move that will increase the standards that guide teaching and learning in our State, given the performance of CT students against their peers in Massachusetts and beyond, and given that my children are entering K-12 public education in two years;
2. Additionally, in my capacity as the Executive Director of Achieve Hartford!, I am compelled to support any effort that will increase the standards used to teach our most vulnerable Hartford students, who *must* be given more targeted and more honest feedback on where they stand if they are to have any chance of competing for the jobs in which local employers want desperately to employ them;
3. Lastly, in my capacity as an education advocate, I respect the effort put forth by policy-makers and educators throughout the country to develop one way to bring K-12 education in our country into the 21st Century because a push towards higher-order thinking skills is simply long overdue in our country.

With this as my basis for providing testimony, I ask that you do nothing to halt the implementation of common core in our State and instead use your positions to communicate with your constituents on the other issues that seem to fuel the debate around common core – namely the issues of testing, teacher support, and change.

More specifically, I'm asking you to do the following:

1. Support unequivocally common core implementation in our state;
2. Urge other legislators and your constituents to address concerns about common core without derailing implementation;
3. Address the fear of increased high-stakes testing by guaranteeing no more than has been the norm these past few years; and also
4. Address the issue of teacher support by committing to strong oversight of common core implementation and committing to taking up the topic of teacher support within *other* legislation as well.

Lastly, it is clear from news across the nation that common core represents an incredible political opportunity for anyone looking to claim government “over-reach” or “anti-teacher” reform taking place. It is my hope that CT legislators take an apolitical look at the subject of academic standards and work hard to ensure that the subject of student preparation for the 21st Century does not become a political football in the current legislative session and the upcoming state elections. This is the one great danger we all see beginning to play out across our state, and we need everyone – our legislators committed to education especially – to rise above this movement.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today, and thank you for your steadfast service to the children and families across the State.

Sincerely,

Paul Diego Holzer
Executive Director