Testimony for Public Hearing  
Education Committee  
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HB 5078 An Act Imposing a Moratorium on Implementing the Common Core Standards

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Boucher, and Respected Members of the Education Committee:

Good Afternoon. My name is Kevin Smith and I serve as the Superintendent of Schools in Bethel. I strongly oppose HB 5078 and recommend that you oppose this bill as well. In Bethel, we have been on a journey of implementation of the Common Core Standards since the state adopted them back in July of 2010. Our approach has been thoughtful, systematic and comprehensive. Our community believes in the potential of the standards and views them as more rigorous, more coherent and more beneficial for advancing student learning than prior standards. The process we have undertaken to implement the Common Core Standards has required extensive training and professional development to support our teachers’ learning. It has required us to critically review and rework our curriculum to ensure that the content we are teaching, the instructional practices we are utilizing, and the local assessments we are creating align with the standards and promote college and career readiness. This comprehensive change process has been on-going for nearly 3.5 years. We have done the vast majority of it without state education department support and we still have far to go. The standards are not “new” to the educators in Bethel. To revert to the former standards would mean, simply, that all of the time, energy, and resources we have expended on this effort were a waste.

I believe that the implementation of Common Core Standards has improved learning across the entire K-12 continuum in Bethel. In my own observations of classroom instruction, I see students who are doing more creative and critical thinking and more collaborative problem solving. I am not the only one who has observed this shift. In preparation for this testimony I reached out the teaching staff and asked for their observations about the impact of the Common Core Standards in their classrooms. Here are just a few excerpts from what teachers shared:

Learning Initiatives Teacher, Christina Ulrich:

One of the strengths is that at every grade level there is an expectation for student-led

“Our Primary Purpose is to Improve Student Achievement.”
questioning, analysis, and application of the skills our students will be expected to possess in the real world.

First Grade teacher, Lauren Catalano:
Using more nonfiction has proven to be highly effective. Not only are my students comprehending what they are reading, but they are also practicing early foundational decoding skills more regularly because they are curious to read what is in the text.

Eighth Grade Algebra Teacher, Lindsey Bowman:
Implementing the common core has had a DRASTIC effect on the instruction in my classroom for the better. The curriculum itself is so much more engaging and rigorous, and I believe, especially this year, that the students can relate to the concepts so much more.

High School Social Studies teacher, Jessica Christensen:
Their rigor, clarity, and instructional shifts have guided me to create more rigorous lesson plans and assessments. I believe that my students are learning to think more critically, read more closely, and write more effectively.

Fifth Grade Teacher, Greg Reid:
Students are actively engaged, excited about content, and are being challenged to think like they never have before. As an educator, I have become much more reflective, am regularly engaged in professional dialogue with colleagues to improve my craft, and have raised the bar for myself.

High School Cadet Teacher and Internship Coordinator, Linda Anderson
The CCSS shifts in the classroom are getting our students to think deeper, transfer skills, use discipline specific vocabulary and focus on data; setting the stage for our students to become great interns and cadet teachers in our community, and making them ready for college or the world of work after graduation.

These are just a few of the voices of teachers from Bethel who have committed immense amounts of time and attention to improving their practice on behalf of children. I have not heard from a single person who believes it would be beneficial to wind back the clock on these standards. Bethel has committed significant time, energy, and resources to the work of implementation; we are seeing the fruits of our effort in the increases in student engagement and learning and expect that this will continue as we continue with our implementation efforts. Please do not enact legislation that would take us backwards.

Finally, while the Common Core Standards enjoy strong support in Bethel, I would like to clarify that Bethel's support for the standards should not be extrapolated to signify tacit support for the either the Smarter Balanced Assessment or the reforms around teacher evaluation. In my mind, the issues and concerns around state standardized testing and teacher evaluation are completely separate and ought to be addressed separately.

Thank you.