

Rev. Eldren Morrison testimony in opposition to House Bill 5078

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, education committee members, good day. My name is Rev. Eldren Morrison. I am senior pastor at the Varick Memorial AME Zion Church, New Haven's oldest African American congregation.

I am here today to speak in favor of the Common Core State Standards and against the proposed moratorium currently before you in House Bill 5078.

In New Haven, one out of three students will not graduate high school. Six out of every 10 African American 10th graders in New Haven are not reading at grade level, according to the State Department of Education.

That is not an acceptable reality. It is clear that we need a set of standards to which our schools must be held, to make sure every child, regardless of race, regardless of income or zip code, is given the tools to graduate high school knowing what they need to know to succeed later in life.

The Common Core State Standards were designed by educators to teach problem-solving skills and critical thinking, without restricting how teachers teach, offering flexibility inside the classroom.

We cannot let our students fall through the cracks, and we cannot brush them off because they are Black or Latino or poor or live in a certain neighborhood, or don't speak English at home.

That's what the Common Core Standards do — they fill in those cracks so that no student is left behind.

So many school districts in Connecticut have started implementing the Common Core Standards. They are begun that process not only because Connecticut adopted the standards in 2010, but because they know how positive the Common Core could be once implementation is complete.

We need to improve public education in our state so every child has access to great teachers, principals, and public schools. Our responsibility is to ensure all kids have opportunity to achieve goals, and the Common Core Standards are a critical step toward fulfilling that responsibility.

Thank you.