



State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission

State Capitol

210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106

860-240-8555

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Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is Glenn A. Cassis and I am the Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC). The mission of the Commission is to promote and improve the economic, educational, health, safety and political well-being of the African-American community in Connecticut. I wish to submit testimony in opposition to H.B. No. 5078, "An Act Imposing a Moratorium on the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards;" and H.B. No. 5331, "An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Revisions to the PEAC Guidelines.

No one in Connecticut should be surprised that there is a problem in public education. For the African-American community it has developed into an ongoing crisis. Four years ago the State of Connecticut led by the Department of Education with approval from the Legislature adopted the Common Core Standards. These standards were not a mandated curriculum set by the federal government. Instead it was a framework for local districts to use to design a high quality, 21st Century curriculum for their students PK-12.

For too long African-American students been at the bottom of the educational ladder in Connecticut. The achievement gap has shown very little progress in narrowing. Statewide more than 70% of high school graduates need to take remedial courses during their freshman year at community colleges and state universities. High school graduates are not career ready for the jobs that provide a living wage. The Common Core is the first thoughtful strategy that has been offered to bring about sustained positive change. The Common Core has helped districts begin aligning their curriculum to standards that will move our students to be competitive nationally and internationally. For the past four years the State Department of Education has made professional development available to principals, teachers and staff for all school districts. They have taken advantage of this opportunity and have prepared themselves for the gradual implementation of a curriculum with high standards.

Connecticut has used assessments for more than more than thirty years. School districts have used the CMT's, CAPT, SAT's and AP exams. The assessments used for the Common Core rollout is not a pass fail exam. It is used to measure how well students grasp concepts and if used

Our Mission

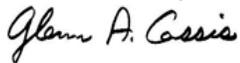
To improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut

properly is a tool to determine the supports students need to gain proficiency. The notion that this assessment should not be used flies in the face of what everyone expects to measure student performance.

Finally if these bills are approved and a moratorium is imposed on the implementation Common Core, what will replace it? What will be provided to the students who are receiving a substandard public education, namely students attending schools in the urban school districts and African-American students? How much longer will these students have to wait? The bar must be raised now. I am confident that our professional educators are prepared and our students are ready for the challenge. The path to high standards will not be easy but there will be enough flexibility for local school districts to implement revisions according to their needs.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.

Submitted by,



Glenn A. Cassis
Executive Director