

Please accept the following written testimony in support of **HB 5078, An Act Imposing a Moratorium on the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards**, and **HB 5331, An Act Concerning the Implementation of the Revisions to the PEAC Guidelines**.

As parents of children in the New Milford Public Schools, we are strongly in favor of rigorous academic standards and preparing our children for a global workforce. We have both earned doctorate degrees in the sciences or social sciences and continue to work in those fields. We have high expectations for our children in their academic endeavors and of the education they are receiving. However, we are strongly opposed to the Common Core State Standards.

The Common Core State Standards were developed without the input of educators, and the grave concerns of veteran educators were ignored. The lack of knowledge of curriculum and child development is apparent to educators and parents alike. The order in which material is now taught is illogical and confusing to students. The types of problems young children are expected to solve demonstrate a lack of understanding of the language and concepts that children can understand at various developmental levels. Rather than providing our youngest students with ample time for play – since young children learn through play – the Common Core places greater demands that are developmentally inappropriate, such as teaching algebraic equations to kindergarteners. In addition, the emphasis on explaining one's reasoning on math problems places an unfair burden on children with language impairments, learning disabilities, English language learners, and any others who do not possess excellent reading comprehension and written expression skills. These standards do not allow for the teaching – and the accompanying assessments are not measuring – a student's true math ability, because there are so many confounding variables. When we are trying to encourage more students to go into Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM) fields, why would we make the teaching of math more confusing, less engaging, and more about one's verbal abilities than true math skills? Finally, because of the pressure to apply for Race to the Top funds, states such as Connecticut were forced into adopting these standards *before they were fully written*. If for no other reason, Connecticut should pass HB 5078 in order to allow time for a Special Commission made up of qualified educators to review the Common Core State Standards and determine (particularly in the absence of any Race to the Top funds) whether it is in the best interests of Connecticut children to continue to adopt these standards. We believe that after a careful review, it will become quite clear that the Common Core State Standards do more harm than good and should be rejected outright.

We also oppose the Common Core State Standards because of their connection to high-stakes testing and the collection of personal data of our state's children. We are alarmed by the amount of information about each child that may be shared with third-party testing services as part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing. The fact that we now live in a digital society does not preclude our attempts to safeguard our children's personal information. Recent changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allow even more information to be shared with third-party, for-profit companies. Given the data breaches that occur now on a regular basis, and the lack of transparency about what information will be shared and with whom, how that information will be protected, and what policies and procedures will be in place on an ongoing basis to keep children's information secure, we have significant concerns about the need to collect information about our children, especially of a non-academic nature,

and how safe it would be. We have similar concerns related to the classroom use of Chromebooks, given the policy of Google to review search content for the purposes of ad placement. As far as we are concerned, advertising has no place in public education. With our state still recovering from the Great Recession, we question whether the purchase of large amounts of Google Chromebooks by districts across the state, primarily for the purposes of testing, and potentially leaving our children vulnerable to privacy invasions, is the best use of taxpayer dollars. Connecticut should join the nearly one dozen other states that have withdrawn or are considering withdrawing from the Common Core because of educational, developmental, and/or financial concerns.

We are also writing in support of HB 5331, because we believe that teachers should not be evaluated on their students' test scores. There are a myriad of factors that can contribute to a child's performance on a standardized test, none of which has any relationship to the teacher's ability. There is a well-established connection between socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement, including performance on standardized tests. Basing a teacher's evaluation on his or her students' test scores will only discourage teachers from working in low-income school districts or with at-risk populations, those who are in greatest need of high quality teachers. Under the current law, students with special needs are required to take the same tests on which their teachers will be evaluated. Special education services are dwindling in every community in our state; teachers are expected to manage the needs of all of their students, including those with a range of special needs, with greater demands and fewer resources. Yet they would then be penalized in their evaluations, when their students with special needs do not perform as well as their peers, and this is considered a reflection of the teacher's performance. Although the Common Core purports to expand children's thinking and understanding of select areas of academics, the ultimate result is quite the opposite. What we need from our educational system are students who can learn to think *critically* – not just regurgitate information or explain their reasoning in multiple ways – but young people who can truly think critically about a problem, develop an argument, engage in creative and collaborative problem-solving, and grow up to be the leaders, innovators, healers, and teachers of the next generation. Using test scores as a means of evaluating teachers forces them to 'teach to the test' because their livelihood depends on it, rather than teaching in a way that allows them to engage, inspire, and challenge our students to be the thinkers that our state and our nation need them to be.

We urge you to pass HB 5078 and HB 5331. Thank you for your time and attention.

Allison B Sidel & David W Minsek
20 Skyview Drive
New Milford, CT 06776