



**Testimony of Bill Phillips
President, Northeast Charter Schools Network
834 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105
Connecticut General Assembly, Education Committee
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Chairpersons and respected members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I'm Bill Phillips, President of the Northeast Charter Schools Network. We are the statewide membership association for the 18 public charter schools in Connecticut, serving more than 7,000 students that hail from 71 of the state's 169 towns.

Because my organization also represents the charter schools in New York, we have a unique perspective on the common core roll out issues up for discussion here in Connecticut.

Let me be clear: we whole-heartedly support the transition to the Common Core. College completion rates in the United States are unacceptable, and this is even more true for students from low-income families. The common core is a way to be more honest with our kids and measure how many of them are truly on track to graduate high school ready for college and the jobs of the future.

We believe that Governor Malloy and Commissioner Pryor have taken a measured and thoughtful approach in pulling the right pressure relief valves early in the process, while still keeping the state on track to enact the common core. Delaying the use of test scores in teacher evaluations and making the new common core tests optional next year were a sensible moves. This is in contrast to the implementation in New York, where until recently, we have resisted any delay in consequences—no matter how much pressure had built up.

Based on the actions the state has already taken, we believe that a full moratorium on the transition to the new common core learning standards and related tests is unnecessary, and we oppose H.B. 5078.

Common Core implementation is one of the most important reforms in a generation. Knowing what "good enough is" underpins everything. Parents and students have a right to know whether they are on track to be college and career ready after high school, and schools need to know whether they're fulfilling their obligation to provide all students with the level of rigor needed to thrive in the 21st Century economy. While these issues stand on their own, this information is fundamental to choice supporters because the concept of choosing implies you have something to measure against.

NECSN fully supports the decision to begin the rollout of the new common core aligned tests. In our opinion, the test results will simply tell the state and the public the current pace of our Common Core implementation efforts. We should accept that it is human

nature that we are never as far along as we think we are, and that a uniform sense of urgency will not arise until there is some pressure in this area. That's why we need the test results to present an early baseline that will be healthy in the long run.

This observation is especially so if we get the consequences right. The first year of testing should be a baseline. The state and school districts should not misuse the data. There should not be immediate "all or nothing" consequences, and the timing of consequences should be thoughtful and deliberate. Using time wisely is important while schools, teachers and parents adjust to the new expectations. As it relates to charter schools coming up for renewal, these baseline tests should not be the data that dictates a school closure.

Governor Malloy and Commissioner Pryor should be commended for the measured, reasonable approach they've taken here in Connecticut. At this point, a moratorium or additional delay will not improve the broader initiative. Lastly, let's remember that our students can't afford to wait to know whether they are truly ready for college and the jobs of the future.