

TESTIMONY
H.B. 5078 AN ACT IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS
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CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CONNECTICUT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT# 18
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The Board of Education of Regional School District #18, encompassing the towns of Lyme and Old Lyme, supports the continued use of Common Core State Standards and would urge these standards be retained for the academic year beginning July 1, 2014. As such, the Board would not favor adoption of Committee Bill No. 5078.

Our 2013-2014 curricula substantially embrace Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts for grades K-12 and it is our plan to continue with these curricula for the 2014-2015 school year. The Board, administration, parents, teachers and students of this district have consistently supported continued enhancement to our educational programs and recognize the Common Core State Standards as a vital step in that direction. There is no going back for us. We are moving forward and urge the State to support our efforts and the efforts of other districts that have chosen to move forward and embrace these standards to the betterment of their programs.

The Board of RSD #18 recognizes that change is difficult - with real change being exceptionally difficult. Over these last two years, our Board has voiced strong reservations with the Commissioner of Education's and the State Board of Education's attempt to introduce Common Core State Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium testing, and an entirely new educator evaluation system all at the same time and in a highly interlinked manner. Such a complex and all-consuming change program carries with it severe risks of failure in one or in all areas.

Our Board believes that much of the frustration being voiced with Common Core State Standards reflects a high degree of frustration on the part of some teachers and parents who are rightfully overwhelmed with this high level of aggregate change in such a short period of time.

Committee Bill No. 5078 would now take this one more dire step further and cause us to revert to 2010 standards and curriculum, not only eliminating our achievements to date but once again introducing a high element of risk of failure to what would be a confused educational and testing environment. We have a hard time understanding how we would introduce such a reversal and make it work for our students.

Our Board recommends instead we remain true in our beliefs to consistently elevate our academic programs. These ideals are readily shared by the vast majority of our teachers and parents who support

thoughtful and flexible change to curriculum standards. They expect us to make it work for their kids and for their families. They expect us to adapt our efforts and move forward.

We recommend we move forward with the Common Core State Standards. We further recommend that the Department of Education conduct longitudinal studies of the effectiveness of these standards and the best practices of the state's school districts in adopting them into their curriculum for math and ELA. As any thoughtful agency for change and change management techniques would in its implementation programs, we recommend that efforts be focused on making the Common Core State Standards work, while allowing districts time to revise their original programs for educator evaluation to insure effectiveness, and finally, direct adequate resources to answering the question of how and when we attempt to link them with a fully field-tested approach to SBAC.

Respectfully submitted.

James P. Witkins