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Written Testimony
Marianne C. Stook
8 Mountain Hill Street
Trumbull, CT 06611

Public Hearing on Common Core
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Room 1E
Legislative Office Building

My name is Marianne C. Stook and my husband and I have 4 children in Catholic Schools in Trumbull, CT. Even though Catholic schools have the freedom to set their own curriculum standards, most every educational institution—public or private—is now being held hostage to Common Core standards by big profit-seeking business, namely the textbook companies. I'd like to share our firsthand experiences with unwanted textbook curriculum that has fully "aligned" with or "adapted" to Common Core standards to demonstrate that they don't work when you take them out from their federally funded, non-transparent, unaccountable-to-voters, closed-door organizations and put them into actual practice.

In our schools, multiplication automacity or "knowing your times tables" is typically required at the start of 4th grade. In preparation, my then third grader spent last summer drilling a two-inch deck of flash cards every day! Imagine her ire when she discovered that the hijacked Common Core math book, didn't begin with multiplication at all (Common Core largely delays multiplication until grade 5). Rather, it spent months on place value, drawing models of math facts and estimation, resulting in most students unable to calculate actual answers! And I wish you could have been in our kitchen when our tenacious then nine-year-old asked why the answer "204" is wrong for a problem that asks: "If 51 students fit on a bus, about how many students fit on 4 busses?"—yes, 204 is "wrong" because Common Core puts emphasis on rounding and estimation and deemphasizes actual calculations, so the "correct" answer is "about 200 students"! As Ze'ev Wurman (who served on the highly acclaimed California mathematics standards committee) has noted (and our daughter vehemently agrees), "wrong-headed Common Core standards that insist ad nauseam in early grades on students to learn arithmetic 'using strategies based on place value, the properties of operations, and/or the relationships,' only encourages students to explore multiple approaches that are bound to confuse them, rather than focus on quickly learning one standard arithmetic set of processes to mastery and then being able to focus on learning deeper content." Thankfully, in our schools, teachers can eliminate this nonsense when they see it is distracting students from our standards. Public schools won't have this choice and as a result, it is not hard to understand why our students may

be more math-illiterate after these standards are implemented! This isn't deeper learning; this is a distraction!

To see how Common Core math standards play out in second grade, consider the experience of another one of our daughters. Her textbook, also hijacked by Common Core-aligned companies, creates confusion through unnecessary exploration of different addition and subtraction models. For example, they spend an inordinate amount of time learning patterns and being able to count up or down from any given number by 5, 10, 20, etc. Seeing how much confusion this strategy was causing in my daughter, I returned her to straight addition and subtraction in traditional columns. The result? Nearly perfect calculations! Needless to say, the tried and true method still works. Many "experts" have tried to insult parents that their children simply are not as bright as they thought they were and need these so-called "rigorous" standards to fix their children's idiocy. I'd like to remind those so-called "experts" of the work done by Dr. Megan Koschnick, child psychologist, who found that Common Core standards are not rigorous, but they are simply developmentally inappropriate for young children. As an example, our second graders were asked to understand and analyze charts to determine the median, mode and range. They were also asked to create charts with given data that required an understanding of "x" and "y" axes. I challenge any of you to try teaching a seven-year-old what an "x" and "y" axis is, much less how to set up a graph accordingly! Consider also the injection of geometry based on transformations (moves, rotations and flips) that had our daughter weeping at the table during homework because she could not mentally rotate one-dimensional objects to get the prescribed answer. Needless heartbreak, tears and feelings of inferiority all on a method that turns out to be highly experimental and was quickly abandoned in the few places it was tried! It is not hard to see how this developmentally inappropriate material could potentially kill our students—especially those more vulnerable populations these standards were targeted to help.

In closing, I would like to urge legislators not to be fooled by the latest term of art, "College- and Career-Ready Standards". Common Core is a cookie-cutter approach to creating automatons that squashes our diverse, energetic, creative children who have unique God-given talents and are capable of contributing to society in so many ways. And even if college is the goal, an under-reported fact is that Common Core changes the definition of "college-readiness" to mean prepared for a non-selective community college, not a 4-year selective university. In addition, research demonstrates that intact families are the best way to foster economic opportunity. Also, research typically shows better off people more often have a college degree NOT that getting a college degree automatically makes young people better off—a distinction that begs reflection when some believe Common Core will cure our societal ills.

Thank you.

Marianne C. Stook