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Connecticut State Legislature
Open Testimony
HB 5078 & HB 5331

Dear Connecticut State Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony relating to HB5078 & HB5331 relating to the more commonly known topics of Common Core and SBAC(standardized testing associated with Common Core). I am asking you today to place a moratorium on the Rollout of Common Core and to reaffirm that Parental Rights are the deciding vote in education as it relates to Common Core or any future facets of education reform that may enter the classrooms of the State of Connecticut.

As a new resident to the state of Connecticut I am overwhelmed and concerned with what I walked into when I was met with the phrase Common Core at the first Parent Teacher Get to know you event. As anyone making a major cross country move does, I pushed aside my concerns initially and chalked it up to 'just something new in a new state'. However, as time went on and more and more issues came to the forefront I was forced to look at the Common Core plan in more detail and 'truly' understand what this was all about and what my child was being introduced to on a day to day basis and what this SBAC was all about.

There are many questions pertaining to the legal introduction of Common Core via the SBOE(State Board of Ed), Local Boards of Ed (BOE) and the National push via RTT(Race to the Top). There are even more questions relating to the overall Constitutionality of the 'mandates' and the 'relaxing' of FERPA/HIPPA laws in order to make the back office piece of Common Core viable. As I am not a lawyer and do not have the background to speak properly on these issues I will leave them to the Professionals who are here today and are much more qualified to discuss and answer questions relating to these issues at large.

What I am here to speak to is the implication of the Common Core Rollout and SBAC testing plans on my community, my student and my family. These implications are

- **Financial** – Common Core places substantial financial burdens on State, Town, District, & Homeowner(s)
- **Lack of Flexibility**- Inability to be child focused- Common Core is not IEP friendly by nature.
- **'Participation Rate' trumps actual learning**- Common Core is more concerned with getting everyone to the testing table and 'developing the perfect test- than in what is actually being learned AND retained
- **Opt-Out**- Common Core and its implementers based the model on the false assumption that ALL students would HAVE TO take the designed testing and submit to invasive data mining by a 3rd party. Parental rights were not considered during the development of Common Core, during the roll out, and prior to this Open Discussion there were even some of your peers who tried to again exclude

Parental Rights and Influence in the discussion as it relates to Common Core and the education of our youngsters.

Common Core Rollout and the associated SBAC testing has financial implications for the tax payers of our state, town and every single homeowner. Be it the need for computers for every student, the need for curriculum development (as we are repeatedly told CCSS is NOT a curriculum), the need for administrators to evaluate teachers, and to evaluate data is almost immeasurable. Our town has done what they could without pricing the taxpayers out of their homes but the result is lack of textbooks and 'rolling' testing. Students have to share access to computers for testing and will make use of time slots that span the course of 3-5 weeks to complete testing for all grades during the testing window. This option is creative and shows a willingness to 'do what it takes' to yield to the mandate, but it does not show a focus on the child, my child. During this 3-5 week window class schedules have to be shortened, changed and specials may be skipped altogether as will pull out services be disrupted across the board. This means during that time frame my child, and I would guess others, in our district will not be meeting the goals of their IEPs. They will not be receiving services, they would otherwise receive, due to the need to accommodate testing for Common Core.

Lack of teacher/student flexibility in teaching is another issue for my student and his teachers. The teachers do not have a curriculum, because Common Core is NOT a curriculum. What they do have however is the CT SDOE website which they access daily to pull down the rubric to explain the UNITS/Topics/and Goals for each time period and the order in which to teach each item in order to be properly prepared for the SBAC and set up for the next UNIT. The website actually states the following:

Developed by David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, two lead authors of the Common Core State Standards, these criteria are intended to help curriculum developers and publishers determine what to include and what to exclude in instructional materials. Districts may consider using these documents in order to judge alignment of published resources such as textbooks and core programs.

Although this may not be a curriculum by definition- it IS a curriculum by practice. My direct experience when asking a teacher for assistance with my child and his struggles in class was that 'Common Core does not allow me[teacher] to teach different material to your child'. I pushed and asked the teacher to understand my goal was not to teach my child different material, but rather to teach the 'same material in a different fashion'. It was repeatedly made clear to me that Common Core standards and teaching do not allow for the Individualized instruction that the IEP(Federal Individual Education Plan) requires.

The district, the school and the teacher(s) have been left the task of rolling out a half-baked, not well developed, non-curriculum to meet an unscientifically based set of standards in order to achieve a 'participation rate' acceptable to the creators of the standardized test (SBAC) which will NOT help my student understand his own strengths and weaknesses and if his errors were careless in nature or lack of knowledge in scope but rather WILL help the test makers go back to the drawing board to 'tweak' the testing and create the perfect mix of success and failure to achieve the scores necessary to market US Students on the World Wide stage as 'superior' to those students of other countries in the Global Marketplace.

Finally the issue of OPT-Out or should it more appropriately be named opt-in? I was one of the lucky ones, when I approached my school district and advised them of my intent to opt out of the SBAC testing I was met with minimal resistance. Of course they asked why- they should- feedback is important. Of course they tried to persuade me to not do so- they should- there are 'participation rates' they are accountable for, regardless of my parental rights. However, in the end (15 minutes after the conversation began) they said they 'respected my parental rights and would honor my request'. Not all parents met with this same rational and professional response. Many parents were simply told they could not 'opt-out'. Others were even told they did not have the 'right' to opt a child out of a test. I said in the beginning I would leave the Constitutional Issue to those who are far more versed on legal writings and can quote Case Law, however on the subject of parental rights and decisions as it regards MY child(ren) I will say that I am the parent of my child and as such I do retain the right to say if he will or will not participate in a SEX-ED talk in class, if he will or will not participate in a DRUG AWARENESS program, if he will or will not watch an 'R' rated movie in class being shown for 'historical significance'- and I do, and will, have a say in if he will or will not take a test in class. If for some reason this Parental Right is in question by those in our State Department of Education or our Attorney General as our inalienable rights as parents- then perhaps the time has come that we need to spell it out for them.

As the representatives of the people I ask that you do so carefully, with deep thought, and without room for misinterpretation by those who would seek to circumvent the good intentions of good people for monetary and personal gain.

Sincerely,

Dawn McNary