

RE: HB 2835

March 16, 2015

To Members of the House Education Committee

My testimony is in support of HB 2835. Every day the evidence is mounting on the false information in which our Department of Education based their decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Thank you for this opportunity for the public to bring you current with what is happening in our schools. Please pass HB 2835.

I wish to point out a few issues that should make you pause and support this bill. Outside of the fact that CCSS has never been proven to be successful, which makes our students guinea pigs, we need funding restored to the classroom and local schools. Common core is centralizing education and that is evident by the centralizing of our education funds. The costs for assessment testing was reported in the Statesman Journal to be about \$4.5 million more than the OAKS tests for a total of \$7 million annually. We also know that the establishment of OEIB took \$3 million from classroom funding. That is \$6 million classroom funding lost annually.

It's all over the web on how companies are cashing in on common core-related contracts and how these companies are steering the direction of common core for their profit line. The Gates Foundation has had an overpowering influence on the instigation of common core and his money speaks loudly.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) spells out the principles of standard-setting for the United States. CCSS cannot be considered standards when judged by the ANSI requirements, which violates the well-established and internationally recognized process for setting standards in a way that is transparent, that recognizes the expertise of those who must implement them, that builds on the consensus of concerned parties, and that permits appeal and revision, of which CCSS has met none of these requirements.

As you may know, a Circuit court judge in Missouri ruled that the state's payment of membership fees to Smarter Balance is illegal. The judge wrote that the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium "is an unlawful interstate compact to which the U.S. Congress has never consented, whose existence and operation violate" Article I, § 10 of the federal Constitution. Specifically, the prohibition on agreements between two or more states without the prior consent of Congress along with numerous other federal statutes [General Education Provisions Act (20 USC § 1232a), Department of Education Organization Act (20 USC § 3403(b)), Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (20 USC 7907(a))]. Missouri House Speaker John Diehl said the House will vote to defund the agreement. Oregon is also violating these federal laws.

It is also clear to me that contracting with Smarter Balance is in violation of ORS 329.485(2), which requires Oregon directly develop and write assessment tests for a state standard. The selection of Smarter Balance to assess CCSS and mere participation on some of the teams does not meet the statute language. This premise is supported by ORS 329.085 requiring school districts to seek public input in the process of establishing standards, which maintains local control over course content, format, materials and teaching methods. Parents and the public have a preconceived supported practice that state assessment tests would be written within the state with local representation to reflect the common interest in their curriculums. The trust of parents and the public has been violated.

There are hundreds of abuses coming out of CCSS that are showing up in our classrooms. Listening to many parents, it's hard to conceive how teachers and schools could think such erratic practices will produce a successful education.

A couple of personal examples from my family illustrates why they project that 60-65% of our students are expected not to pass the Smarter Balanced Assessment test based on CCSS. One of our second grade teachers said our district hasn't given them a curriculum to teach so they are left with figuring out what common core standards will be on the assessment test. In other words, they are teaching to the tests.

Case one. When taking math tests, CCSS forbids teachers to return the tests so students can find out what they don't understand. My granddaughter didn't do well on her first test and was told they could retake the tests. But, when asked to see the test to learn what she did wrong, she was told that common core rules don't allow the tests to be returned. She told the teacher that it wouldn't do any good to retake the test and get the same answers wrong since she has no way of knowing what she doesn't understand. Further, the teacher isn't allowed to review the test with the class to make sure the students were grounded in that concept before going on to the next lesson. Since algebra builds on concepts, students are left on their own to figure out what they missed and learn it. Not an easy thing to figure out for any student. There is no real teaching in CCSS and the guidelines lists class monitors with students teaching each other. This is a big concern to my granddaughter who already has a STEM career in mind, especially when professionals are saying there is only 2% chance that high school graduates in common core will ever be able to obtain a degree in STEM because the level of preparation is insufficient.

Hung-Shi Wu, professor emeritus of mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the Common Core development team says: "The amount of time given to the high school standards was definitely inadequate." This is consistent with Dr. James Milgram, who serves as professor emeritus of mathematics at Stanford University and one of five members of the 30-person Common Core validation committee who refused to sign on to the standards. In his report, he detailed that, by seventh grade, Common Core mathematics standards leave American students two grade levels behind their peers internationally and do not prepare them for admission into highly selective four-year universities and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs.

Case two. My granddaughter in 8th grade tests at 12.6 grade level in comprehensive reading. The common core reading standard is that they are to read all their required reading points at or above their reading level – not above her grade level, but she must do college level reading. Most adult reading is not even college level reading. She is stuck with reading such things as War and Peace and other classics in order to even get a grade because common core grades on your reading level and not whether she meets or exceed the grade requirements. Her teacher is dumbfounded trying to give her interesting reading that would meet her point requirement to pass. So, she is faced with failing reading even though she far exceeds her grade or read boring book for a 13 year old. Instead of broadening her education with multiple books of interests, her interest in reading is deteriorating.

Case three. My grandson is in kindergarten and receives good marks. However, he is expected to memorize words before he is taught to sound out letters. We tried this approach back in the early 50s and discovered it didn't work. At home we are teaching him phonics, but you can't expect busy parents to fill in this education gap so the program will succeed. In full day kindergartens we are seeing classrooms turned from places of experiment through play and learning games into a place devoted to academics inappropriate for young children to the extent that CCSS asks them to select careers that will define the mapping of their education.

There are many more examples of how CCSS is failing our students, particularly the mentally challenged, but my point is that the one-size-fits all standards is the death to inspiring learning for students. The Senate Education Committee heard testimony (February 10) from Dr. Yong Zhao, Presidential Chair and Director of the Institute for Global and Online Education, College of Education, University of Oregon, who stated that CCSS are not aligned with a child's brain development and further evidence that pushing a child beyond their capacity will result in behavior problems. As the legislature is looking to resolve attendance problems, it is clear that CCSS will only add to that problem. We must remember that Albert Einstein didn't speak until he was 4 and didn't read until he was 7. What would he have accomplished if he were put into kindergarten at 5 and forced to learn in an unproductive way. Worse yet, teachers are now trying to force parents to medicate normal children over their frustration of forced learning.

The time is right to make a set of standards and tests that are better for our students' college or career readiness. An interim gap to new standards would be to update our OAKS tests. If Oregon has the courage to take this step back and reclaim our autonomy over our state standards as many other states are doing, we will see more positive results from having extra funding for classrooms to a more individualized education so every student can succeed.

PLEASE VOTE YES ON HB 2835.

Donna Bleiler
State Coordinator for
As A Mom

Radical Moms in Oregon