

Testimony to Ohio House Rules and Reference Committee

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HB 597 Common Core Legislation

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Heard, members of the Ohio House Rules and Reference Committee, and guests, I am honored to have this opportunity to meet with you today and share my perspective on House Bill 597.

My name is Eric Gordon and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. CMSD is the second largest district in Ohio where nearly 40,000 students and their families rely on us to provide a quality education that will prepare them for college and a 21st century global workforce.

I am here today to ask you to oppose House Bill 597 which, if passed, would repeal Ohio's New Learning Standards and the Common Core Standards for mathematics and language arts.

(1) One argument against the Common Core state standards is that the standards will limit what teachers teach. All standards articulate what students are expected to know and, therefore, what teachers are expected to teach. That is true whether it be Ohio's current standards, Ohio's New Learning Standards, the Common Core, or the adoption of standards from Massachusetts or other states.

What's important to understand is that teachers' academic freedom is in *how* they teach those standards. Unlike the current standards, it will be more difficult for teachers to simply "teach to the test" and become enslaved to the standards, when the common core promotes critical thinking, effective communication and forming evidence-based opinions as the foundation of the standards.

(2) This repeal would not simply "pause" in Ohio to give us an opportunity to further investigate standards, but instead would replace current standards with an interim set of standards while new standards are developed. This would create significant change over a four-year period, and would amount to three changes in the life of a K-12 student. The reliance on Massachusetts' standards, that is currently being proposed, ignores the fact that Massachusetts has begun using the Common Core in place of its own standards as well.

(3) There is an opinion that the standards were written as federal legislation and that they were not inclusive, when, in fact, the standards were born from The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers and included a diverse set of educated opinion makers.

These include representatives from higher education and from K-12 education, staff from state education agencies, including Ohio and also included widely-deployed public feedback and comment. In fact, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District provided feedback on the standards prior to their adoption in Ohio. Finally, after thorough review and feedback, the standards in Ohio were adopted by Ohio's state education governing body—the Ohio State Board of Education—as opposed to being imposed by the federal government or any other agency outside of Ohio.

(4) There is also a misconception in Ohio about the level of support from teachers in Ohio.

In Cleveland, our teachers, in partnership with the Cleveland Teachers Union, became early adopters of the Common Core standards in 2010 when Cleveland was awarded a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and subsequently an innovation grant from the American Federation of Teachers. Teachers and other educators in our district have been working on readiness for the implementation of Ohio's New Learning Standards since 2010.

Abandoning Ohio's Learning Standards and the Common Core would also negate:

- Four years of professional development to help teachers prepare for the implementation of the standards in their classrooms
- A realignment of our district's entire Scope & Sequence curriculum to the Common Core standards and Ohio's Learning standards in science and social studies
- Investment of technology in all of our classrooms to ensure working computers are available to all students in the use of technology-based assessment as early as kindergarten, so children can be familiar with the new assessment model, and
- The piloting of the PARCC assessment in the last school year in our early grade classrooms
- And, recent adoptions of instructional materials more closely aligned to these new standards.

Our children in Cleveland and in Ohio must be prepared to exit high school ready for careers and colleges in Ohio, across the nation and across the world.

Our Board of Education in Cleveland unanimously passed a resolution in support of the standards, and Board members, parents and community partners have all traveled to be here today to show their support.

It would be easy for me to come to you and ask that we not move toward more rigorous standards of student learning, especially in a district that is struggling to meet Ohio's current standards. It would be easy, but it wouldn't be right.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our opposition to HB 597

I am open to your questions or comments.