



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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January 21, 2014

Commissioner Stefan Pryor
State Department of Education
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Pryor,

The news that the Connecticut Department of Education will spend \$1 million to promote the Common Core has prompted widespread concern from constituents who have contacted my office to question whether the money could be better spent elsewhere. I share their concern.

Instead of mounting an unprecedented PR campaign to convince the public that the a nationwide Common Core standard is beneficial, the state of Connecticut should use the \$1 million dollars to implement teacher evaluations, common core standards, new testing to replace the CT Mastery Test, the purchase of school textbooks, software, computers and opening more slots for our wait listed preschool and Vo-Tech students, not to mention social workers and additional reimbursement for special education and transportation costs. Each of these options would be a more productive use of limited resources.

It is also unfortunate that the Common Core program was enacted in Connecticut without discussion or debate by the state legislature. Such an enormous overhaul of education policy would typically go before the education committee and the public hearing process. It is, therefore, understandable that many questions and concerns persist since the decision to implement a nationwide standard and testing system was made without public involvement.

The perceived need to market this program to the public also suggests that more information about the Common Core standards and its implementation should have been made available from the beginning. The state of Connecticut should have been more assiduous in answering the objections brought forward by citizens who continue to worry about the impact of Common Core standards on our education system.

There are also very real concerns regarding the minimal amount of time allotted for proper implementation of both the teacher evaluation system and the new Smarter Balance state test during the same academic year. It has become clear that more computer training for our young students is desperately needed for

them to adequately take the new Smarter Balance test. Given the complexity of the new requirements, school districts would need more than just compliance information; they would also need training and guidance on how to properly implement them. Many are also worried that the Common Core lacks feedback and revision mechanisms to identify and resolve the kind of problems that are bound to arise in a program of this scope.

I ask that the Department reconsider its plans to for a Common Core PR campaign and redirect the \$1 million dollars to fund vital education programs. It may also be beneficial to your office that you consider granting waivers to districts that need more time to implement the SEED evaluations of teaching staff and to those looking for more time to transition to the smarter balanced test.

I thank you in advance for your response, and for your time and attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Toni".

Sen. Toni Boucher
Ranking Member, Education Committee