

Testimony Before the House Rules and Reference Committee
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On behalf of the Ohio Business Roundtable
Sub. H.B. 597
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Mr. Chairman, members of the House Rules and Reference Committee, my name is Paolo DeMaria, and I'm a principal consultant with Education First – a firm specializing in education policy development and strategic implementation. Prior to joining Education First, I served for 25 years in state government here in Ohio in various capacities beginning in the mid-1980s. Throughout my entire career of state service – and continuing in my current work – I've been involved in education policy – especially here in Ohio.

I'm joined by Susan Bodary – also with Education First. Susan is a Partner in the firm, and also has a long career of public service in Ohio in education policy in the government and non-profit sectors, and both public and private school settings.

Susan and I are pleased to appear before you on behalf of the Ohio Business Roundtable as interested parties on H.B. 597. While the Ohio Business Roundtable's leadership in education reform is well established in support of high standards and improved student academic achievement, the Roundtable as a public service asked us to present to this Committee fact-based information about the history of standards in the state of Ohio, and about the Common Core State Standards which have been adopted as Ohio's New Learning Standards in math and English Language Arts. Our goal is to be neutral in this presentation and this is the reason we are testifying as interested parties.

We completely support the desire of this committee to work in the pursuit of what is best for the boys and girls of Ohio. Susan and I have both raised our children here in the Buckeye State. We're here because we love Ohio. Like you, we want to see our state have the best education system possible to prepare each child for a successful future of their choosing. We also want our state to offer a good quality of life, have an engaged citizenry and a strong and secure economic future. Talented Ohioans are the key to that future.

In the course of our remarks, we're going to address the following areas:

1. Ohio's long commitment to standards and improving the state's education system.
2. The facts about Common Core Standards Initiative – an initiative by states, for states, that has benefited significantly from the involvement of Ohioans.
3. The important protections recently enacted in H.B. 487.
4. The implications of making the changes being contemplated in H.B. 597.

History of Standards in Ohio

Before we discuss the current situation here in Ohio, it's worth reviewing where we've been. If we think back about the history of our country and our state, there was once a time when there was no such thing as state academic content standards – no mandatory state assessments – no school district or building report cards. And, it was fine. Ohio's economy, and that of the nation, had plenty of jobs in the factories, the fields, and in mining and natural resources that relied more on the physical abilities of

people than their cognitive abilities. You could find a job with Ford, work on the farm, or in the steel mills of NE Ohio, or the coals mines of Appalachia and you'd be set for life. Education at the time was primarily a function of "seat time" (measured in high schools as Carnegie units). A student was simply required to take a certain number of courses in English, math, history, sciences, and so forth. It was a measure of time spent rather than results achieved. It served well enough in its time.

But then things began to change. We began to witness the transition from the "Industrial Age" to the "Technology/Information Age." Increasingly innovation led to higher productivity and jobs done by people were made obsolete by changes in technology. Available jobs required an increasing level of sophistication – and ultimately education. You can still see the impact of this transition in places throughout Ohio – in our major urban areas like Youngstown and Toledo, and in SE Ohio. Even our agricultural communities have witnessed significant change. Even though Ohio continues to have strong manufacturing, agricultural, and mining/extraction sectors, the educational level – knowledge and skills - required for the workers in those sectors is very different than it was 30 years ago.

To give you an example, the same welding once done by hand in auto plants is now done by robots. The individuals that work on the assembly line now need to be able to program and operate the computers that run those robots, and so require a much higher level of knowledge and skill.

This economic transformation didn't just happen in Ohio – it happened across the nation and, increasingly around the world. And, unfortunately, the nation's public education infrastructure generally was unable to keep up. And so in 1983, President Ronald Reagan convened the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This commission was comprised of representatives of higher education, K-12 education, the business community and other stakeholders. The commission released the report "*A Nation at Risk*." The report is most remembered for the statement that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." This report represented a wake-up call of sorts to the nation, to states and to communities.

What the Commission found was also beginning to be understood by state leaders – and so states began to address the challenges that they saw in their own states.

So what happened in Ohio? Let's recap some of the significant events that have taken place over the past 30 years. This chronology is by no means comprehensive – it focuses on some of the highlights around standards, assessments and accountability, spanning five governors: Celeste, Voinovich, Taft, Strickland and Kasich.

- **1987:** A mere four years after "A Nation at Risk" the Ohio General Assembly passes H.B. 231 which calls for ninth grade proficiency tests in reading, writing, math and citizenship. Passing these proficiency tests would become a requirement for high school graduation beginning with the class of 1994. This legislation was the first clear statement from the state that a high school diploma needs to reflect some minimum level of knowledge and that there needs to be consistency among districts relative to the minimum expectations for students graduating high school. It wasn't clear at the time what percentage of students might not graduate, but it appeared that the legislature believed that Ohio's education system would rise to meet the benchmark being established.

It is significant to note that the General Assembly recognized that it would take time to develop and implement the tests, and give students the opportunity to learn the content in order to pass the tests. Schools and districts have complete control over curriculum and materials that would be used with students. It is noteworthy that the legislation did not call for standards.

- **1992:** The General Assembly passes H.B. 55 which adds fourth and sixth grade proficiency tests in reading, writing, math and citizenship. The bill also calls for the development and administration of a science proficiency test in fourth, sixth, ninth and twelfth grades. Passing the ninth grade science proficiency test would become a requirement for graduating from high school beginning with the class of 2000. This legislation reflected an increasing recognition that it is important to have an understanding, through testing, of what students know and are able to do at earlier grades so as to improve the likelihood that they are well prepared when it comes time to take the ninth grade tests.
- **1997:** The General Assembly passes S.B. 55 which calls for the development and implementation of tenth grade proficiency tests. These tests would replace the ninth grade tests as a requirement for high school graduation. The bill also expanded the number of required units for high school graduation from 18 to 20. Ten years after the first high stakes tests were authorized by state law, Ohio was already raising the expectation for what it wants its high school graduates to know and be able to do.

S.B. 55 also creates the state's first accountability system – calling for report cards to be prepared for districts and the designations “Effective,” “Continuous Improvement,” “Academic Watch” and “Academic Emergency.” This reflects a desire on the part of the state to increase transparency and help citizens, parents and students know how well districts are performing. This was viewed as critical to driving the changes needed to continue to improve academic outcomes.

- **1999:** The report “*A New Compact for Ohio Schools: A Report to Ohio's Educational Policy Leaders*” is issued. This report was produced by Achieve. Achieve is a non-profit organization led by a Board that consists of an equal number of state governors and leaders of large businesses. There is a mix of both Republican and Democrat governors. The Achieve report was jointly sponsored by the Ohio Business Roundtable, the Office of the Governor and the Ohio Department of Education. Among its conclusions was that, “Ohio needs a set of academic standards that are clear, specific and measurable; that describe the knowledge as well as the skills the state expects its students to master.” The report was informed by the sobering findings of the Ohio Skill Gap Initiative, joint research conducted in 1998, by the Ohio Business Roundtable and ACT, that found , “...only one Ohio student in fourteen is leaving high school well-prepared to participate in Ohio's emerging knowledge-based economy.”
- **2000:** Governor Taft creates the Ohio Commission on Student Success. This commission is made up of teachers, principals, superintendents, parents and business and government leaders. His charge to the Commission is to answer four questions:

- ⇒ How do we make it crystal clear to students, parents, and educators what students should know and be able to do in each grade and before graduation?
- ⇒ How should we measure student performance and progress in each grade?
- ⇒ How should we hold students and adults responsible for academic achievement?
- ⇒ And how do we make sure that all parts of the system work together in complete alignment?"

Up until this point, Ohio had tests, but no standards. This meant that there was no clear articulation of what students needed to know and be able to do. The *de facto* standards were the testing frameworks that were used to guide the test development process. The Commission recommended that Ohio needed to specifically articulate standards for what students needed to know and be able to do, and to then build assessments around those standards. The Commission also recommended that Ohio report cards begin to be developed for individual schools (in addition to being developed at the district level), and include disaggregated information – that is, information for subgroups of students (economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, racial/ethnic groups, etc.).

It's also interesting to note that the DeRolph II Ohio Supreme Court majority opinion made reference to the work of the Commission on Student Success and stated that, "Strict, statewide academic guidelines must be developed and rigorously followed throughout all of Ohio's public school districts."

- **2001:** The General Assembly passes S.B. 1 which implements many of the recommendations of the Commission on Student Success. For the first time, the Ohio legislature authorizes the development of academic content standards. It also calls for new assessments aligned to those standards, and revisions to the state's accountability system. The Ohio Business Roundtable creates Battelle for Kids which develops value-added assessment and capacity building tools for Ohio's educators.
- **2002:** Federal legislation that reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (known as "No Child Left Behind") is signed in Hamilton, Ohio by President George W. Bush. The most significant provisions of this act required states to have:
 - ⇒ Academic content standards in English and Mathematics. But, NCLB left to states complete discretion about what standards they adopt.
 - ⇒ Tests in math and English in each of grades 4-8, and once in high school, based on the state's standards. States also were required to establish benchmarks for what constituted "proficient."
 - ⇒ Accountability systems for schools and districts that report information about student subgroups – students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, limited English-proficient students, and various racial/ethnic categories.
 - ⇒ Systems of intervention and consequences for schools and districts that do not make "adequate yearly progress" toward the goal of all students being proficient by 2014.

- **2003:** The General Assembly passes H.B. 3 to make modifications to Ohio laws to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. This legislation called for a number of additional innovations most notably the use of value-added measures of student progress as part of Ohio's accountability system, and the use of a performance index as a composite measure of school and district accomplishment.
- **2004:** The report titled *"Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts"* was released as part of the American Diploma Project. The premise of this report is that one of the most prevalent credentials in the United States – the high school diploma – had very little real meaning. There was no consistency in what a high school diploma meant with regard to what a high school graduate knew and was able to do, and no significant relationship between the diploma and what is necessary to be successful in work or college. This work was intended to identify the body of knowledge that was necessary for students to succeed in college and/or meaningful careers and to identify how the high school diploma can serve a real purpose as a credential of learning.

One of the most interesting parts of this report is that the researchers, after extensive interviews with college faculty and with business managers, were actually able to show that the same skills that are needed to succeed in college are those that are needed to succeed in careers.

- **2005:** Based on its *"Ready or Not"* report, the American Diploma Project Network was created by a handful of states' governors, education commissions and business leaders. Ohio is a founding member of this network, and along with the other twelve founding members, publicly committed to putting in place college- and career-ready expectations, graduation requirements and other measures to support student readiness and achievement. The network provided an opportunity for states to work collaboratively to identify policies and strategies that support college and career readiness. This network is by states, for states. There is no federal government involvement.
- **2006:** The General Assembly passes S.B. 311 which specifies a required set of courses that a student needs to pass in order to receive a high school diploma, including a greater number of them focused on math, English and science. The substance of the bill was the result of Ohio's work as part of the American Diploma Project Network and significant engagement with Ohio educators, employers and college faculty. This bill is the first explicit recognition of the desire for more students to be college and career ready upon graduation from high school. It also called for recommendations for new mechanisms to measure college and career readiness.
- **2007:** At the request of the State Board of Education, Achieve, with support provided by McKinsey and Co., conducted new research and released the report *"Creating a World Class Education System in Ohio."* The report provides an analysis of Ohio's education system benchmarked against best-in-class international policies and practices. The report commended Ohio on a number of elements of its education system. It also said that if Ohio wanted to be truly world-class it needed to be committed to high challenge,

high support and aligned incentives. The report made a number of recommendations for specific actions that could continue to move Ohio on the road to educational excellence, and improve the college and career readiness of students.

- **2009:** The General Assembly passes H.B. 1 which calls for the state to adopt new standards. The Department of Education, in response to the earlier research, had already been engaged in identifying principles for developing new standards and had engaged in international benchmarking analysis. H.B. 1 called for standards that would be more coherent, focused and rigorous, and that would include the following:
 - ⇒ The core academic content and skills for each grade level that will prepare students for post-secondary instruction and the workplace for success in the 21st century
 - ⇒ The development of skills related to creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration;
 - ⇒ The development of skills that promote information, media, and technological literacy;
 - ⇒ The development of skills that promote personal management, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility; and
 - ⇒ Interdisciplinary, project-based real, world learning opportunities.

The bill also included provisions that would eliminate the use of the 10th grade Ohio Graduation Test as a graduation requirement and instead move toward a system of end-of-course exams in high school combined with a nationally standardized assessment that measures competencies in math, English and science.

2010: The State Board of Education, in response to the requirements of H.B. 1 and as a result of the state's participation in the development and review of the Common Core standards, adopts the Common Core standards for English/language arts and mathematics in June 2010. The Board acts after circulating the standards for public comment and presenting the standards to the House and Senate Education Committees. It's important to remember that a majority of the members of the State Board are elected.

It is interesting to note that as early as 2008, as a result of a number of states aligning standards to real-world demands for college- and career-readiness, researchers had already observed a remarkable degree of consistency in English and mathematics requirements across 16 states, representing nearly 38% of the nation's student population.

- **2010:** Ohio submits its Phase I application for the federal Race to the Top grant in January 2010. Ohio does not receive an award in Phase I. It submits a Phase II application in June 2010, and is announced as a grant winner in August 2010.
- **2012:** The General Assembly passes H.B. 555 which requires Ohio to move to an A-F style report card. The bill specifies the various elements to be included in the report card. It also established the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

- **2014:** The General Assembly passes H.B. 487 which provides a number of protections in response to concerns raised about Ohio’s New Learning Standards. The bill also clarifies the high school graduation requirements in the context of new tests adopted as required by H.B. 1.

As you can see, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the past 25 years, Ohio public leaders and policymakers have been deeply engaged in efforts to improve education for Ohio’s boys and girls. This work has included significant engagement of Ohio educators and stakeholders, and has proceeded independently of any influence by the federal government. We’ve been able to witness a progression of policy that holds the state’s education system to higher expectations with the interest of graduating more students ready for college, career and citizenship – and the driving force has been Ohio policymakers who care.

A key takeaway from this history is that the work is hard. Change is hard. Teachers get frustrated. Parents get frustrated. Students get frustrated. But with time and support, the new requirements become easier, and we begin to see the improvements from the change.

It is also worth noting throughout this period that at no time was there a state law or other legal requirement that schools use any specific curriculum. Districts and schools have always had, and continue to have complete freedom with regard to the adoption of curriculum, textbooks and instructional materials.

I’m going to turn it over to Susan now to discuss the Common Core and the implications of the legislation you are considering today.

Facts about the Common Core State Standards

The Ohio story we just discussed is not a unique one. The same story was unfolding in many states across the country. And, as with so many policy areas, states talk to each other. Governors talk to other Governors. State School Superintendents talk to other State School Superintendents. As Governors and State Superintendents discussed the challenges of improving their education systems – and worked side by side in efforts like the American Diploma Project, they quickly came to realize that the differences between states as it relates to education are not particularly significant. Basic math in Illinois is no different than basic math in North Carolina. Reading and writing in California is no different than reading and writing in Colorado. Students graduating from one state go to colleges and universities in other states, and can start careers anywhere.

But state leaders – competitive by nature - want to know where their students stand relative to others. They know the power of state comparisons to motivate improvement. They understood the need for higher standards, and the inherent unfairness of defining “proficient” differently in every state. They realized how easily political realities can lead to less rigor. The notion of a strong talent base, and employers locating where the best talent is, has been a long standing need of business leaders. So the ability to compare expectations and outcomes became an important tenet of the approach. They realized that comparing student outcomes between states was not enough, comparisons with the best nations in the world was also needed.

From these many realizations emerged the imperative for a set of common standards – not in all subjects, but simply in two core subjects – that would set a high standard that would be internationally competitive and comparable across states. And so at the direction of governors and state school superintendents, NGA and CCSSO began to work on the idea of developing a common set of core standards in English/language arts and mathematics. These discussions started in 2008 and the work began in 2009.

These organization both work at the *direction* of state leaders. They are not independent organizations. They do not have the liberty to engage in work that is not supported by a majority of their members – who are state officials. It has been suggested that NGA and the CCSSO do not reflect states working together. Nothing could be further from the truth. Additionally by working together, and benchmarking the standards to the best in the world, the governors ensured that the standards would be high, and not simply reflecting consensus around the lowest common denominator.

The processes used by NGA and CCSSO – and Achieve – were designed to be open to public review and feedback. Specifically, the Common Core State Standard drafts were released for public comment in September 2009. Almost 10,000 comments were received, and a subsequent round of draft Standards was shared with the public in March 2010. The Ohio Department of Education posted the Standards on its website and conducted 18 meetings around the state in March and April of that year for the public to ask questions and provide feedback about the Standards. The Standards were also presented to Ohio’s House and Senate Education Committees in May 2010. The Common Core State Standards were finalized and released publically in June 2010 and, shortly thereafter, adopted by Ohio’s State Board of Education.

There are a number of myths circulating about the Common Core that we’d like to take the opportunity to set straight, and we have included an addendum to this testimony to further clarify some of these:

1. ***English/Language Arts and Mathematics:*** The Common Core standards are limited to mathematics and English language arts – two content areas that represent the primary focus of colleges and universities when gauging a student’s readiness to succeed in college work and many career training programs when gauging student readiness to earn workforce certificates and credentials of value in the marketplace. Nothing in the Common Core limits states from having standards in other areas. Ohio’s New Learning Standards are uniquely “Ohio,” the state having chosen to supplement the Common Core standards in math and English with state-developed standards in Social Studies and Science as well as in non-core subjects like fine arts, financial literacy, physical education, technology and world languages.
2. ***Exceeding the Standards:*** There is no limitation on moving beyond the standards. Schools are free to teach math beyond Algebra II and English/language arts beyond the levels specified in the standards. In fact, the standards documents state, “While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught. A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers. The aim of the Standards is to articulate the fundamentals, not to set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified herein.”

The real problem, however, is that not enough students are reaching the basic standards for entering college. In 2013, ACT reported that 31% of the Ohio high school graduates taking the ACT met none of the college ready benchmarks.

3. **Standards are NOT curriculum:** The standards in no way dictate curriculum. There will still be Schools for the Arts, Science Academies, Foreign Language immersion programs, electronic schools, etc. Every flavor of school and instructional approach that exists today can and will continue to exist under the Common Core – because nothing prohibits them from existing. Districts and teachers can choose from a wide array of curricular resources and materials, and are free to create their own. Teachers and school districts develop their own reading list of appropriate books and literature for their students – these are not prescribed by the standards.

The standards documents actually state, “These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods” and “By emphasizing required achievements, the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed. Thus, the standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of metacognitive strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards.”

4. **No Federal Involvement:** The standards were not developed by the federal government. They were developed for states by states, with the support state and gubernatorial organizations. Nor were any federal funds used in their development. The Common Core standards in no way “centralize or nationalize” public education. Not all states have adopted them. States, districts, schools and teachers retain control over everything that happens in the classroom per the laws and traditions of each state. As has always been the case, schools and districts can be challenged by implementation choices. Some of the materials, worksheets and assignments we have seen in the press or heard about in these hearings are a result of implementation decisions, not the standards themselves. As schools and teachers gain experience with the standards and the materials that work best for them and their students, these issues will be resolved over time.
5. **Common Core Standards are Voluntary for States:** No state receiving federal No Child Left Behind funds is required to adopt the Common Core. The requirement is college and career ready standards, and with federal waivers, states are setting their own approaches to accountability for student achievement. Texas and other non-Common Core states have received waivers, and Ohio operates under a waiver as well.

With regard to the Race to the Top grant that Ohio received, we have to remember that applying for Race to the Top was discretionary. Several states did not apply, and Ohio was under no obligation to do so. And while the Race to the Top grant application awarded points for states that were members of multi-state efforts to develop college and career ready standards, no state was forced to apply for these funds – and many states that applied did not receive funds through this program. It’s also worth noting that Race to the Top funds had nothing to do with helping states that were struggling financially. States knew that Race to the Top funds

would need to support new activities -- activities the states themselves designed and proposed to implement to bolster student achievement and strengthen education within their state.

States are free to abandon the standards at any time. Most are not doing so, because the more people examine the standards themselves the more they see that they are true reflections of what students should know and be able to do, and the more they see the benefits for their students. And while some recent polls have indicated more people have a negative impression of the standards, it also reveals that they know little or nothing about them. Given that we are in the implementation phase – and that change is challenging – it is not surprising at all.

It is notable that the highest performing states in the country, including Massachusetts and Maryland, have adopted the Common Core. In fact, Massachusetts was in the midst of updating the standards this legislation proposes to adopt, when the opportunity to participate in and consider Common Core arose. Massachusetts had determined that their current standards had taken the state as far as they could, and was working to transition to more a more challenging set of expectations. The state conducted significant third party analysis of their yet-to-be-adopted standards against the Common Core, had an open public process for stakeholders and a unanimous vote of their State Board of Education to adopt them.

The earliest states implementing the standards are beginning to see results. For example, from 2011-2013, the academic achievement of Tennessee students increased more than students in any other state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the Nation's Report Card, making Tennessee the fastest improving state in the nation. At the same time Ohio's students showed virtually no improvement.

Another notable fact about the Common Core Standards in our state is that there are a number of entities who are in no way required to adopt the standards, but who have done so anyway – voluntarily. For example, a number of private schools are using the common core standards into their curriculum. All seven of Ohio's Catholic Dioceses have incorporated the Common Core into their Graded Courses of Study and have adapted them to meet their specific needs and faith identity. The FAQ documents put out by several of the Dioceses make it clear, at least in the eyes of the Dioceses, that the standards were not developed by the federal government, that they do not compromise any Catholic school's ability to choose textbooks and instructional materials , and that they do not compromise religious freedom.

Other private schools have adopted the Common Core as well. One particular Christian Academy in its parent newsletter talks about the Common Core as follows:

“When you review the standards and benchmarks in the CCSS, you will quickly find the school chooses the literature, informational texts, and mathematics teaching materials all of which continues to allow CHCA to provide a Christ-centered learning environment. We are steadfastly adhering to our foundational beliefs while providing students a world class education.

If these types of schools are using the Common Core when they didn't have to, that is an endorsement of the high quality of the standards and their ability to contribute to an excellent education.

Responding to Current Concerns

As history has shown us, when Ohio policymakers identify issues and challenges in a public policy area, they take action. Ohio's history of standards-based reform is in direct response to a desire to provide what is best for the boys and girls across the state of Ohio, and not being satisfied with being second rate. More recently, however, Ohio policymakers heard a number of the concerns about the state's new standards and this General Assembly has taken action to respond. In recently passed H.B. 487 a number of provisions of state law were enacted that directly address concerns that have been raised. These include:

- Requiring that any standards adopted by the state have the following characteristics:
 - ⇒ Include "essential" academic content skills for each grade level (instead of "core" content and skills as under current law)
 - ⇒ Instill lifelong learning by providing essential knowledge and skills based in the liberal arts tradition, as well as science, technology, engineering, mathematics and career-technical education
 - ⇒ Be clearly written, transparent, and understandable by parents, educators and the general public
- Creating academic standards review committees in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. While educators, professionals and parents have always participated in standards development, this elevates the work to an even higher level of public discourse.
- Requiring each district to establish a parental advisory committee, or another method of review, to provide opportunity for parents to review the selection of textbooks and reading lists, instructional materials and the academic curriculum used by schools in the district.
- Reaffirming that the district board is the sole authority in determining and selecting textbooks, reading lists, instructional materials and curriculum for its schools.
- Allowing a district board to permit teachers and other educators to create instructional materials, including textbooks consistent with the board-adopted curriculum.
- Providing relief to teachers and districts relative to the impact of new standards and assessments on evaluations and report cards for one year, while they make the transition.
- Prohibiting the state from working with multi-state consortia around standards for social studies, American history, American government, or science.
- Increases Ohio's already strong data provisions to further safeguard student identifiable data, prohibit collection of certain types of data, prohibit the use of data for certain purposes and prohibit data sharing with multi-state consortia.

The Risks of Changing Course

One of the many lessons we can learn from Ohio's history is that developing and implementing new standards and assessments takes a real investment of time and resources. And change is always difficult. So it is important to understand the risks to the state of changing course and weigh that against potential reward for students.

1. **Lost time, diverted focus:** Ohio has spent four years working on implementation of the state's New Learning Standards. Professional development has taken place. Textbooks and materials have been developed or purchased by districts. Teachers and administrators are working together on implementation. Serious instruction is underway. To stop now puts the system in an extended state of limbo, and then requires even more time before we're back on track – all the while other states and nations are passing us by. Most importantly, children who were poised to benefit from the rigor of the new standards will now have to wait. An entire group of young Ohioans will be “on hold” while new standards are developed and implemented.

If we understand the bill correctly, it requires implementing three different sets of standards in four years – the current Ohio Learning Standards this year, the pre-2010 Massachusetts Standards next year and the following year, and a newer set of Ohio Standards for 2017 – which means that a considerable amount of time will be diverted from a clear and direct focus on teaching current standards and improving classroom practice, to understanding and implementing different standards.

2. **Lost money:** Ohio school districts have already spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past four year in order to implement the standards. New standards will essentially mean this money was wasted. More money will have to be invested in new standards, and monies received from the federal government for the Race to the Top grant may need to be repaid as Ohio would not have standards judged to be “college and career ready” in place, violating one of the key commitments of the grant. At the local level district resources would need to be redirected from a focus on deepening the teaching and learning supports, to starting over with a new set of new standards, additional professional development and aligning the work to them. Using three different sets of standards over four years, developing Ohio's new standards and investing in completely new assessments significantly increases the investments needed at both the state and the local levels.
3. **Pause implementation of the third grade guarantee and A-F report cards:** These relatively new initiatives designed to boost transparency, provide students with the support they need to reach critical learning benchmarks and hold adults in the system accountable for helping students learn are in their earliest stages of implementation. To abandon our Standards now, or allow districts across the state to ignore them completely, would set these efforts back by several years, effectively negating the power of these important policies enacted by this General Assembly. Transitioning through three sets of standards over four years, as well as at least two different sets of assessments, could result in data that doesn't allow us to make good judgments about our progress and necessary next steps until sometime after 2018.
4. **Create confusion and frustration:** Pulling the rug out from under classroom teachers just when they are getting the hang of Ohio's new standards would be counter-productive. Teachers support the standards and want to continue to be able to implement them properly. Early implementer states, like Tennessee, are realizing success at unprecedented rates; while Ohio's

progress has been largely stalled. Change is difficult – even when there is a clearly articulated and viable goal with ongoing support and progress measures. But the type of ongoing foundational change contemplated in this bill risks creating both frustration and confusion for educators, students and parents alike, without the kind of predictable path a consistent standards implementation provides. **Distracting from the focus on teaching and learning.** The easy part of education improvement is creating standards. The hard part is the intensive focus on improving teaching and learning through professional development and practice. Our teachers and education leaders throughout the state are hard at work – as they always have been – helping our students learn and achieve. Following through on our support of their good work, assisting with smoothing out implementation challenges. That is what will create a difference for our students. By repealing the common core standards we miss the opportunity to continue to focus on what really matters – great teaching and high quality pedagogical approaches.

5. **Will the proposed changes result in greater student achievement?** Not by themselves. As stated previously, standards are the *what* we want students to know and be able to do. The rest – how student learn, who teaches them, how teaching is supported, what curriculum materials are used, how progress is measured - is what makes those goals real. As early as 2008, there was already a significant amount of commonality between state’s standards – as states working independently to peg their standards to real world expectations of work and college. The bill calls for the new standards to be both distinct and independent of the Common Core as well as certain assessments. This raises the question as to whether such standards – still intending to set expectations at a college and career ready level – could be developed to meet the demands of the law.

Conclusion

You’ve heard from a number of people recently who are upset and feel let down by the Common Core State Standards initiative, and who for whatever reason didn’t engage in earlier conversations, feedback or dialogue opportunities over the past four years. Ironically, you didn’t hear from another set of people whom the state has let down -- the students that have been told, “You’re proficient” only to find that when they apply to a college or university they are simply not ready to succeed in credit bearing classes and have to enroll in remedial courses. The most recent data (2012) indicate that this is about 41% of Ohio high school graduates that enroll in an Ohio public college or university. They and their parents have to spend tuition dollars (and the state spends higher education subsidy dollars) in order to simply reach the level that they should have been able to reach in high school.

Ohio’s old standards didn’t reach high enough to fully represent what students need to know and be able to do at their next step after high school. That’s why so many high school graduates that enroll in college test into remedial courses. Ohio’s students deserve more. And students across our state deserve to know that their achievements are comparable to students across the country and the world. Students are the primary beneficiaries of both the rigor of the common core standards, and the common-ness of them. That no matter where they go, they need to know their diploma is good enough to help them make their next step.

Four years ago, policymakers and elected officials made a choice to bring new accountability to this new landscape. The implementation of Ohio's New Learning Standards along with the new tests and the state's A-F accountability system are putting Ohio on the right track. Preparing our kids to succeed, regardless of whether their choice is work immediately after high school or additional postsecondary learning. Our children – all of the children across Ohio - deserve the best we can give them – and they deserve our commitment to getting here as quickly as possible. Delaying what has been started for three years is unlikely to serve students better than if we continue to focus on teaching and learning in our classrooms. Mechanisms are already in place to periodically review and amend Ohio's standards, as well as to collect input and improvements over the course of implementation. The recent MBR also put in place a stronger public process for that to occur with more Ohio stakeholders than ever before.

We don't need to stop what we are doing and redirect our efforts. Continuing to let the current work started so many years ago provide for a better education for our children is likely not only a better return on investment, but the best path possible to serving the students throughout our state.

APPENDIX

Inaccuracies and Clarifications

Press Conference Announcing H.B. 597 -- Legislation to Repeal the Common Core

(Times shown in parentheses refer to the Ohio Channel video at <http://www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=144349>.)

Statement	Fact
<p><u>Federal Intrusion:</u> “The role of the federal government in education should be minimal. This one-size-fits-all, top-down approach has not worked in the past and is not likely to work in the future. So this bill is to address that question and that concern. ” (00:30)</p> <p>(Reading Heidi Huber’s statement) “Their efforts have advanced our cause to protect Ohio’s children, parents and education system from the immediate centralization and nationalization of public education that is the Common Core state standards initiative.” (2:55)</p> <p>“I’ve looked at this first from a federal intrusion into work that is strictly, in my mind, the work of the states. The federal government does some things well –the military, national defense, a number of other things. But most of the things, especially when they try to implement a 50 part system, ends up failing miserably....This is beginning to prove another disaster by the federal government in terms of attempting to implement the same system not only in 50 states, but in multiple communities that are different throughout the third largest country in the world.” (4:20)</p>	<p>The Common Core was developed by states working together, led by governors and state school chiefs. The federal government has never required states to adopt the Common Core Standards and federal agencies were not involved in the work to develop the standards. The standards were developed because Governors and state school chiefs recognized that the standards that each state had individually developed were not sufficiently rigorous and directed at helping students graduate from high school ready for college and careers.</p> <p>The Common Core standards in no way “centralize and nationalize” public education. Not all states have adopted them. They are not mandatory. Schools and teachers retain control over everything that happens in the classroom.</p>
<p><u>Student Data Confidentiality</u> “We continue to hear serious concerns about the confidentiality</p>	<p>Ohio has among the most rigorous laws protecting the confidentiality of student data in the country. State confidentiality</p>

<p>of student data being gathered based on prior agreements and the testing regimen that goes along with it.” (00:40)</p>	<p>provisions go beyond Federal FERPA requirements. Additional protections were added recently in H.B. 487.</p>
<p><u>What Ohio Needs:</u> “This new bill will fully repeal the common core, institute new proven high standards and assessments, ensure confidentiality of student data and return control to the citizens of Ohio.” (1:10)</p> <p>(Reading from Heidi Huber’s statement) “This new legislation will build upon Sub. H.B. 237 and addresses issues such as the immediate replacement of Ohio’s New Learning Standards for core subjects including English/language arts, Math, Science and History with high-performing, proven standards that are under the control of Ohioans. An immediate move to interim standards testing which contains proven measurability without sacrificing valuable instruction time, language to safeguard student and family data, an efficient process for review, incorporation, implementation, of interim and new standards and return to meaningful local control that recognizes parental authority.” (2:20)</p> <p>“One good example that we’ve looked at closely is Massachusetts. Massachusetts prior to Common Core had the number one standards in the nation. They had gone from a modestly performing state to tops in the nation. One of the questions that logically comes up, why would they go to the common core when they had one of the best standards in the nation. The answer is a lot of federal money. That is what has affected the process here.” (15:00)</p> <p>“We want to look at standards that are tested, proven and effective, so that Ohio has something that they can rely on and have some, it’s all about data, good data on what has worked.”</p>	<p>The Common Core standards are comprised of the best standards that have been used in schools in the U.S. and internationally. They are based on the input of practitioners and benchmarked against best practices across the world. This international benchmarking also led to the standards being “fewer, clearer, and higher;” more focused and coherent – which is the way the best schools in the world approach standards.</p> <p>The standards are not new, and are proven. For example, the Kindergarten math standard “Count to 100 by ones and by tens” is not new. The standards reflects what students should know and be able to do based on proven prior practice.</p> <p>Developing new standards for Ohio in math and English will be costly and time consuming. (The estimate for the effort in Indiana to create new standards and the accompanying assessments is \$30 million.)</p> <p>Ohio’s science and social studies standards are not part of the Common Core and have been developed by and for Ohio.</p> <p>Massachusetts chose to adopt the Common Core because they viewed them as the best way for Massachusetts’ education system to continue to be the best in the nation. http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=5634</p>

<p>(15:55)</p> <p>“The standards we’re going to have in place are going to be better standards than the Common Core.” (38:40)</p>	
<p><u>Local Control:</u> “Our goal is to ensure that those closest to the people have appropriate input into educational standards, content and associated tests.” (00:33)</p> <p>(Reading from Heidi Huber’s statement): Ohio parents, concerned teachers and citizens have worked tirelessly since early 2013 educating friends, neighbors and communities about the dire consequences of Common Core – chief among these the destruction of local control.” (1:46)</p>	<p>The Common Core preserves local control. Local districts and their teachers are in complete control of everything that happens in the school building and the classroom – from the selection of textbooks and materials to the sequencing of instruction and pedagogical approaches.</p> <p>The Common Core document itself makes it clear that teachers have absolute control over what happens in the classroom. It says, <i>“These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods. For example, just because topic A appears before topic B in the standards for a given grade, it does not necessarily mean that topic A must be taught before topic B. A teacher might prefer to teach topic B before topic A, or might choose to highlight connections by teaching topic A and topic B at the same time. Or, a teacher might prefer to teach a topic of his or her own choosing that leads, as a byproduct, to students reaching the standards for topics A and B.”</i></p> <p>Also: <i>“By emphasizing required achievements, the Standards leave room for teachers, curriculum developers, and states to determine how those goals should be reached and what additional topics should be addressed. Thus, the Standards do not mandate such things as a particular writing process or the full range of metacognitive strategies that students may need to monitor and direct their thinking and learning. Teachers are thus free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards.”</i></p>

	<p>And finally: <i>“While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or should be taught. A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curriculum developers. The aim of the Standards is to articulate the fundamentals, not to set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified herein.”</i></p>
<p><u>Lack of Legislative Awareness</u> “Most folks in our caucus either because of folks who in their districts who have contacted them or because of ...in their campaigns they’re being asked by folks in this room or other local reporters ...have been asked, ‘Hey the full house, the caucus has never really had a chance to talk about this.’ I think there have been two hearings in the Education Committee on this – so there hasn’t been a lot of testimony there hasn’t been a lot of other things presented, so a lot of members of our caucus don’t know.” (10:05)</p>	<p>Common Core has been talked about, reported on and the subject of discussion for over four years in Ohio. No attempt has been made to keep this work secret. Every action Ohio has taken has been transparent and fully reported and disclosed.</p>
<p><u>Process Issues:</u> “When you talk about the four year process it was a four year process that a lot of people in Ohio were not aware of and even I, sitting on the Education Committee for the past four years, didn’t hear a lot about it. You don’t see things labeled as ‘Common Core.’” (11:25)</p> <p>“What happens is you’ve got a four year rollout but then you’ve got a time when it actually impacts people. And now they’re seeing the results of the standards and the associated curriculum...all of which was done in kind of this closed circuit ...so it was all ready to roll out upon people without any real ability for them to react. I know the Gates Foundation spent over a \$100 million on this thing, the federal government has spent ten-of-millions of dollars on this. A lot of folks weren’t at the</p>	<p>Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans have been aware of the work of the implementation of the Common Core. There has been no impediment to any public discussion or debate over the standards. There are many examples of people being forthright in expressing their opinions on the Common Core – both pro and con.</p> <p>Prior to the standards being adopted, they were extensively circulated in draft form for public input. Thousands of comments were received.</p> <p>The standards were approved by elected officials. The majority of the members of the State Board of Education are elected.</p> <p>Federal funds were not used in the development of the standards. The website of the Common Core standards clearly states, <i>“Federal</i></p>

table.” (12:50)

As we discussed, whether it is the federalism aspect that Rep. Huffman talked about, whether it is the inferior quality of the standards relative to the ones that we would like to select, we agree that standards are important, we want them to be the best in the nation and we want them to be standards that have been tested and proven. So yes it will represent a change, I think. School districts are undergoing change right now, and a lot of the concern that they have is the excessing testing, the cost of implementation – I know in Stark County alone it was \$1 million in additional administrative cost for the Common Core State Standards Initiative. So, there are a lot of concerns that have not been allayed that are real and are present and now is an appropriate time to address those as best we can. (16:40)

(About the contents of the bill...) “My understanding is that we have standards that have already been written, tested and proven. The State Board does have the role of ultimately approving those. But we’d like to have a process whereby the House can bless that in some way, shape or form. That’s one of the things that we’re exploring with LSC. It has been done in the past, standards have been approved by resolution or some other kind of action by the legislature and I think that would probably provide public reassurance that, in fact, their elected officials are aware of and supportive of the process.” (26:00)

“The standards under the Common Core initiative were copyrighted. So you were not allowed to change any of the existing standards. You were allowed to add 15% -- but that 15% was not going to be on the assessments. So, why would you change or add 15%? So there was a lot of what I would call check-mates built into the process whereby here’s what you’re going to have, you’re going to call it Ohio’s learning standards, but they’re

funds have never and will never be used to support the development or governance of the Common Core or any future revisions of the standards. Any future revisions will be made based on research and evidence. Governance of the standards will be independent of governance of related assessments.”

<p>copyrighted and owned by somebody else. You're not allowed to change them. You can add 15%, but it won't be on the assessment. The fact of the matter was we were not in control of this and certainly the mandated assessments were something we were not in control of. And it's kind of ...I would almost say creepy the way this whole thing landed in Ohio with all the things already pre-packaged – people met in some think-tank or room someplace else and did this.” (34:55)</p>	
<p><u>Perspective of Teachers</u> “There’s been kind of a climate of concern, fear...some cases intimidation.” (reference to contact by teachers to Thompson) (12:15)</p> <p>“I would just like for those teacher to feel like they’re not merely in the process of becoming testing administrators. One of the comments I hear is that all the joy has been taken out of teaching. And I also hear that there is not going to be time for music and art and some of those other things because we’re so aggressively moving to seven tests to try to satisfy the federal folks that want the data.” (19:50)</p> <p>“One of the things you’d be maybe not surprised to hear is how many teachers are leaving the profession because of Common Core.” (20:15)</p>	<p>A substantial percentage of teachers support the Common Core. There is frustration among teachers with implementation and how the new assessments factor into teacher evaluations.</p> <p>Schools will continue to teach art and music and other subjects. Nothing in the Common Core standards limits these types of pursuits, and many teachers understand how to teach these subjects in a way that integrates with the new standards.</p>
<p><u>Losing Federal Funds:</u> “One of the things that’s difficult for the federal government is that if they come to reclaim the money on this, they’re going to be admitting in effect what they said was not true from the beginning, that it wasn’t really a federal program. And it really has been from its inception.” (23:50)</p>	<p>States are not required to receive any money from the federal government for education purposes. Ohio and all other states have for many, many years accepted federal support for serving students with disabilities, educating low income students, improving teaching practices, etc.</p>

<p>“The likelihood probably is that we will be able to retain what we have received. If we need to make financial adjustments, I think we will. But again, with the desire to not continue down a path that is not working, I think we’ll have to adjust accordingly.” (24:15)</p>	<p>Federal regulations require that if grant funds are not expended consistent with grant requirements they must be repaid.</p>
<p><u>State Associations:</u></p> <p>Superintendents: “Here’s what I’ve found about state associations, and particular the superintendent’s association—sometimes the association has an official stance, and sometimes superintendents around the state think something completely different. The Superintendents in particular are folks that “here’s what the policy is and we need to support that” – and then they take the Representative into the office after the meeting and say “here’s what I really think.” And certainly folks within the process who have to run entities and run them smoothly and fund them, they have a different perspective than the customers and the people who are sending their kids. You find that out with school choice. You find that out with all sorts of things that Superintendents wants and parents don’t.” (31:20)</p> <p>OEA and OFT: “I think that they have learned. If you’ve noticed at the national level, all of the sudden you’re hearing a much different tune that’s being sung. And you’re even hearing politically a different tune that’s being sung now on the other side of the aisle and by those associations now that, ‘We’re not so sure that we love this as much as we told you were supposed to love it.’ And I think that it’s because of members are singing from a different songbook than they are. They’re not happy about it. Their association may not be where they are. But I think there is, as I alluded to earlier, there’s a pressure not to speak up and say</p>	<p>BASA, OSBA, and OASBO all support the Common Core and have encouraged their members to do the same. (http://ealerts.ohioschoolboards.org/msgs/2017.html).</p> <p>Both OEA and OFT support the Common Core standards. Both organizations have honest concerns about the quality and pace of implementation – but they have not backed down from the standards. See the OFT press release criticizing the new proposed legislation at: http://oh.aft.org/press/legislators-make-inaccurate-statements-about-teachers-and-common-core</p> <p>The teachers unions are concerned about the linkage between the assessments and teacher evaluations. Again, this concern has nothing to do with the standards themselves. It is about the effective implementation of the standards and the assessments, as well as the fairness and validity of evaluation systems.</p>

<p>negative things about the Common Core because of the financial aspects that folks were concerned about.” (33:00)</p>	
<p><u>Individualized Student Learning:</u> “We have to realize that each kid learns individually, and we want to try to recognize that. I think Common core doesn’t do a very good job of that. It kind of treats everybody as pretty much the same. And so we want to try to give teachers that latitude to make a difference. The one thing that we know, and I don’t think there’s any debate about this, is that teachers make the critical difference here. And if teachers are not enthusiastic about it, if teachers feel under assault, if teachers feel like their profession is not valued in this case, and not really had good input, then they’re going to not be happy about it.” (40:00)</p>	<p>The Common Core allows each child to be treated differently. Teachers and districts have complete flexibility about what goes on in the classroom, and with each individual student every single day. The Common Core do not prescribe what is taught in classrooms or when.</p> <p>Any set of standards, including Ohio’s previous standards, afford the opportunity to teachers to differentiate instruction and individualize the academic experience. The Common Core are not different.</p>
<p><u>Common Core and Choice:</u> “Once people believe that they’re being told to do something that they don’t want to do by the government, they don’t like that. Americans don’t like that. And this issue has turned. Americans now view this as an intrusion by the federal government on the most important thing to them -- the education of their children. You have to send your kids to school, or you’re homeschooling them. And, if you have to do that, you want it to be done your way. One way to do that is to have a lot of school choice where there’s multiple options. That’s not always possible, especially in small towns where there’s not another school for 10 or 15 or 20 miles. Americans have decided, by and large, both on the left and the right, they are being told what to do with their children by the federal government. So, this issue is going down.” (44:20)</p>	<p>Many choices will be available to parents for their children. There will still be schools that focus on the fine arts, STEM, Spanish immersion, electronic instruction, etc. These schools will be able to continue to differentiate and individualize instruction to meet the needs to students who want these approaches.</p>