

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 2289

March 21, 2013

Chairman Kelley, Vice-Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Minority Member Trimmer and members of the House Education Committee: thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you and to share my thoughts regarding HB 2289. I have been asked by the leadership of the State Board to join my colleague, Ken Willard, and perhaps other members, to speak in opposition to the proposal to make certain that Common Core Standards receive no funding. Like you, I've listened to and read communications from many individuals who have written and/or spoken of their support for or their opposition to Common Core Standards. While I am new to the State Board and I wasn't a member of the Board when it approved the Kansas Career and College Ready Standards, I am not new to education policy-making.

For 16 years, I sat on this panel and listened to conflicting testimony so **I have some understanding of the quandary in which some of you may find yourselves. I know that it isn't always easy to decipher between the facts based in reality and the facts that are based in emotion as you attempt to ensure your decision is based on facts that reflect Kansas reality.** Many sources of information have come from out-of-state where the situation is likely different, because states have their own unique education systems and may have agreements with the Federal Government, Kansas does not have. In addition to the information you have been provided, **it is also important to consider the cost of re-writing and implementing new standards.** Not only will the cost to the taxpayer will be repeated, but the precious dollars already expended will have gone to waste if this pending action passes. Will your vote ensure that in a year Kansas students will be taught and take assessments, guided by a set of standards that are more rigorous than those used for No Child Left Behind OR will your decision stop the Kansas Career and College Ready Standards dead in its tracks, thus requiring a return to weak standards, likely causing a loss of the waiver and unfortunately, forcing Kansas to return to No Child Left Behind requirements?

It isn't overnight that the State Board can gather the necessary individuals together to rewrite the standards...go through the necessary time for receiving input from the public, from teachers, parents, businesses, etc. for the writing and re-writing processes, development of assessments and ultimate approval by the State Board. It takes years, not days or months. The Kansas Career and College Ready Standards have been put through those paces. Educators have pointed out that new standards will look similar to Common Core Standards because the sources are the same. We will simply call them something else...which, by the way, Kansas did name our standards something else...Kansas Career and College Ready Standards. **As a retired educator, as a parent, as a grandparent, as a former legislator; I am very concerned that by the time the State is able to rewrite the standards and develop the assessments, our Kansas students, including my grandsons, will have lost 3 to 5 years of opportunity to have a more rigorous education and they will NOT be as ready for careers and college attendance as they should have been.** Remember, our children are generally only in each grade once...do we really want to keep them from receiving, on a yearly basis, the most rigorous education possible?

If you have read the full set of math and language arts standards, **which standard(s) do you find objectionable?** I've not heard anything specifically about any of the standards. **I have only heard concerns about statements found in a textbook.** In Kansas, the State Board of Education adopts standards and develops the state assessments; by law, the writing of the actual curriculum and the selection of textbooks is left to the local school boards.

Common Core Standards began to be developed by the Governors and the State Chief School Officers BEFORE the current President was first elected. [The State Board adopted them in 2010.] During that time as Vice-Chair of the Education Committee, I was aware that they were being developed. My initial response was that our standards were already too low, we didn't need to lower them further. I had several questions and concerns about the appropriateness of us working with other states to develop standards that were similar in nature. When it became obvious that these standards were more rigorous than what we had, my concerns began to lessen. In addition, since we are home to several military installations, the Military expressed interest in common standards. Military children fall victim to the many varied standards across the nation and having similar standards throughout the states will allow these children to be better prepared for each school venue to which they move and thus give them the ability to thrive in each setting instead of struggling to catch up or being bored by a lesson they covered last year, etc. I also liked the idea that **these standards had been generated by a collaborative effort of the states, NOT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT!** No Child Left Behind ...ESEA... was to be reauthorized soon and the states wanted to tell the Federal Government what would be acceptable, not the other way around. When the Obama Administration saw the Common Core Standards, they evidently found them acceptable, in fact, evidently so much so, now individuals who have become aware of the existence of the standards believe this administration developed them which is UNTRUE.

The State Board has been told by Diane DeBacker, Kansas Commissioner of Education, that there are no requirements that Kansas have Common Core Standards to receive Federal Funds. In fact, when Kansas applied for the first round of "Race for the Top" grants, I was still in the Legislature. Kansas's proposal was not selected as one of the "winners". The proposal was scored and suggestions were made so if Kansas chose to apply for the second round, we could re-work the proposal, make the needed changes, and re-submit. Dr. DeBacker indicated that the changes that the evaluator(s) requested be made would have required Kansas to make changes that were determined to be ones we didn't want to make regardless of the amount of the grant.

Kansas accepts funds from the Federal Government for Special Education and for Title programs, not to mention funds for the School Lunch Program. Any time government provides money to entities, it will have a nexus to the recipient in those areas and requirements may come with the money. If certain standards are ever required for acquiring funds for Special Education and for Title programs, Kansas will have to comply to receive the funds. It will not matter what the standards are called, the requirement will be the same.

In my humble opinion, defunding Common Core Standards or Kansas Career and College Ready Standards WILL NOT solve any of our concerns about the Federal Government's potential involvement in Kansas Education data collection, etc. Such concerns can only be addressed through legislation that states specifically that the State of Kansas reserves the right to restrict the Federal Government's ability to impose requirements on the State and Kansas School Districts in order for the State of Kansas to receive funding, etc. **Please allow Kansas to continue to work toward improving the level of rigor required of Kansas students NOW, not in 3 – 5 years! I urge you to vote NO when asked to remove the funding that would provide for the full implementation of the Kansas Career and College Ready Standards.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you today! I will be happy to stand for questions, if needed!

Deena Horst, EdD, Member
Kansas State Board of Education, District 6