



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lee M. Zeldin

## State Legislators Advance Legislation to Halt Common Core

LEE M. ZELDIN February 12, 2014

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Contact: Kara Cumoletti: (518) 455-3576 or (315) 289-7419 [cumolett@nysenate.gov](mailto:cumolett@nysenate.gov)

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ALBANY—Senator Lee M. Zeldin (R-C-I, Shirley), Senator Greg Ball (R-Patterson), Assemblyman Al Graf (R,C,I –Holbrook) and Assemblyman Ed Ra (R-Franklin Square) introduced comprehensive legislation today to halt Common Core and its associated testing for three years.

In 2010, the State Education Department secured Race to the Top Funding from the U.S. Department of Education. In exchange for \$700 Million in funding, the state education department made various commitments related to educational standards, testing, a teacher evaluation system, and data collection.

As part of this, the Common Core Standards were adopted—without legislative approval—and the implementation of such has been nothing short of a disaster.

The misguided transition to Common Core has resulted in an emphasis on developmentally inappropriate material and poor educational outcomes. Worse, the hasty implementation and lack of communication between NYSED and educators on the ground have created widespread problems for teachers and parents, resulting in poor outcomes for students.

“Common Core has been a failure,” said Senator Zeldin. “As the father of twin, school-aged children, I understand the need to prepare our kids for success, but not at the expense of a quality education. I don’t want to see my girls lose their love of learning at such a young age. It’s time to halt Common Core for the sake of our education system, our educators and our children.”

Additionally, the Board of Regents just recently adopted several recommendations from the Regents Work Group to adjust the implementation of the new Common Core standards. Among other things, the

recommendations included a request for hundreds of millions of additional state dollars to support the creation of a Core Instructional Development Fund. Clearly, the cost of implementing the Common Core curriculum and testing related thereto, has already far exceeded the federal funding that our state received, and is threatening to further strain our limited state education resources.

Senator Zeldin continued, “I support higher standards for our students, but the implementation of any appropriate new standards needs to be executed significantly better than what we have seen. Before the state further invests in a program of questionable merit, that is not producing positive results, we need to assess the effectiveness and decide—as a state—which direction is best for our children. Until then, it’s time to halt Common Core.”

The bill (S. 6604) would convene an independent commission, the Blue Ribbon Commission on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Testing and Curriculum, charged with:

- studying the implications of changing standards and determining the best method of improving public school education,
- reviewing the time and resources allocated to preparing for and administering state-wide tests and the impact they have on the quality of instruction for New York students,
- making recommendations regarding appropriate methods in transitioning to new educational standards based on their findings.

Most importantly, during the review period, set to conclude in the 2016-17 school year, school districts will not be required to implement the Common Core curriculum, nor will they be required to administer any state test based off of those standards. At the end of the review, the Commission will be tasked with taking a vote on whether or not the Common Core Curriculum should be reinstated in the state of New York.

It is important to note, the bill as it is written, will not jeopardize any No Child Left Behind (NCLB) funds. As for the highly contested Race to the Top Funding, if a waiver is granted by the federal government, the bill will not cost New York any of the designated funding. If the waiver is not granted, New York will not lose \$700 million dollars as some Common Core supporters have suggested, because, among other reasons, the state has complied with other portions of our Race to the Top obligations. That being said, the sponsors hope that the federal government will do what is right on behalf of the children of New York State.

“According to the federal government, Common Core was designed to provide a uniformed standard for students, preparing them for college and careers. Regardless of the good intentions, Common Core has become an Uncommon Disaster,” said Senator Greg Ball (R, C, I – Patterson). “My office has been inundated with phone calls, emails, letters and faxes from parents, teachers, students and community members that are very concerned with this new program. We must be committed to providing our students with the best possible education available. However, education is not about teaching to the test and it should never become a one size fits all endeavor, sinking to the lowest common denominator.”

Assemblyman Al Graf said: “This bill is a culmination of six months of doing hearings throughout the state. We listened to parents, grandparents, educators, mental health professionals, and many others. This bill should be the road map on how to achieve higher standards, while at the same time considering the diversity of our students. This bill in the words of Dr. Joe Rella, Stops it, Fixes it, and if it cannot be fixed we scrap it. I take great pride with being a co-author of this legislation with Senator Zeldin and Assemblyman Ra.”

Assemblyman Ed Ra said, “This bill will provide relief to NY's students by giving our school districts the flexibility they need and deserve to steer their curriculum locally. The blue ribbon commission it creates will be tasked with evaluating the effect common core is having on all students, and in particular be tasked with evaluating its developmental and age appropriateness, its effect on special education students and english language learners BEFORE making a determination to move forward with its implementation. In short, it stops the testing and rushed implementation and does the due diligence that should have been done before the common core was ever adopted and ensures that New York's teachers, educational experts and parents have a seat at the table in developing new policies for New York's schools.”

Senator Zeldin concluded by saying, “This bill lays the foundation for achieving higher standards without jeopardizing the quality of our education system. It’s been a long time coming and I sincerely appreciate the hard work and tireless advocacy of all those involved in championing this issue.”