



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Urges US Education Secretary to Abandon Proposal Which Would Punish Local School Districts

JACK M. MARTINS July 14, 2016

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-7th Senate District) has sent the following letter to the US Education Secretary with regard to the Secretary's proposal to decrease ratings for schools that have high opt out rates:

July 12, 2016

Secretary John B. King, Jr.

United States Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary King:

I am writing to you regarding your proposed regulations to decrease ratings for schools with high opt out rates.

As you are aware from your tenure as New York State's Education Commissioner, New York State, and Long Island in particular, is home to some of the nation's finest and highest performing schools. They are a point of pride for parents and teachers who are heavily invested in ensuring that our children receive a top quality education.

You also know that these same communities have very serious concerns about Common Core and the impact increased testing is having on our children. Those concerns, combined with the flawed rollout and implementation of Common Core in New York and the perception that the state's education department and Board of Regents were unresponsive, led to the opt out movement in 2013 and its growth in the years that followed.

As you must be aware, the tests you reference are no longer used to evaluate students in New York and are also no longer used to evaluate teacher performance. Surprisingly, rather than acknowledge this reality, your efforts would hold school ratings hostage to a paradigm that was flawed to begin with and has become entirely irrelevant to proper pedagogical evaluation.

Your proposal doubles down on many of the things that spurred the opt out movement in the first place; parents and teachers feeling that they are being ignored and that the federal government is usurping local control. It will only fuel the fire and cause more division.

The purported rationale for this emphasis on higher test participation, notwithstanding again that they are not used for student or teacher evaluation, is that the results will be used to data mine test information including determining whether subsets of children are underperforming. But, Secretary King, what is the validity of such test results for

analytical purposes when the children taking the very exams being evaluated know that they take those exams without consequence? I trust that you would agree that any trends or data points taken under such circumstances would be suspect at best.

I would again encourage you, as I have in the past, to listen to parents and teachers, bring them together and develop consensus as to how to resolve this issue. The Common Core experiment has failed – the sooner you recognize that failure and move on, the better off our children and education, in general, will be.

In closing, I encourage you to continue to strive for higher standards in education, but to do so in a way that respects the reality that education is fundamentally a local issue and that success must be tied to extensive input from stakeholders – students, parents and teachers.

As always, thank you for the time and courtesy in reviewing these concerns. Please feel free to call should you wish to discuss.

Sincerely,

JACK M. MARTINS

New York State Senator