

Cooper, Kathy

From: American Family Association of PA <info@afaofpa.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 19, 2013 9:59 AM
To: David Sumner
Subject: Testimony Regulation 6-326; IRRC No. 2976
Attachments: Testimony to IRRC 11.18.13.doc; IRRC Testimony - page 2 11.18.13.doc

Attached and below is the American Family Association of Pennsylvania testimony opposing PA Core Standards IRRC No. 2976:

David Sumner, Executive Director
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
via email: dsumner@irrc.state.pa.us
RE: regulation 6-326
November 18, 2013



Dear Mr. Sumner:

I write in strong opposition to the PA Core Standards - IRRC No. 2976. The claim this is a state-led initiative is so far off the mark it is ridiculous! A little background: In 2007, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Eli Broad Foundation pledged \$60 million dollars into a campaign to infuse education into the 2008 political race. In May, 2008, the Gates Foundation awarded a \$2.2 million grant to the Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy which, one month later, hosted a symposium alongside the National Governors Association (NGA) on education strategies. NGA and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) began accepting federal grants with which to launch Common Core. In December, 2008, NGA, CCSSO and Achieve – their contractor in Washington, D.C. – laid out a vision for Common Core standards in a document called *Benchmarking for Success* - again funded by the Gates Foundation! The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act earmarked \$4.35 billion for states that make “significant progress” toward four education-reform objectives. One week after the bill was passed, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan rolled out the federal “Race to the Top” program through the Department of Education (DOE). In a C-SPAN interview, Secretary Duncan explained, “We want to get into this game.... There are great outside partners – Achieve, the Gates Foundation, others – who are providing great leadership.... I want to be the one to help it come to fruition.” The Gates Foundation has given grants to the PTA, National Catholic Education to push Common Core. How much have business associations in Pennsylvania received from Gates to push it here in the Commonwealth?

Phase I Race to the Top applications were invited in November, 2009, with a due date of January 19, 2010. “[A]pplicant states were required to demonstrate their commitment to Common Core without having seen even a draft of the standards.” How much Race to the Top money did PA received tying us to Common Core?

Problems within the "standards include: The curriculum replaces the classics with government propaganda. According to the American Principles Project, "They de-emphasize the study of classic literature in favor of reading so-called 'informational texts,' such as government documents, court opinions, and technical manuals." Over half the reading materials in grades 6-12 are to consist of informational texts rather than classical literature. Historical texts like the Gettysburg Address are to be presented to students without context or explanation.

-- The math standards are equally dismal. Mathematics Professor R. James Milgram of Stanford University, the only mathematician on the Validation Committee, refused to sign off on the math standards, because they would put many students two years behind those of many high-achieving countries. For example, Algebra 1 would be taught in 9th grade, not 8th grade for many students, making calculus inaccessible to them in high school. The quality of the standards is low and not internationally benchmarked.

-- When the new Common Core educational standards were crafted, penmanship classes were dropped. But at least seven of the 45 states that adopted the standards are fighting to restore cursive instruction. Pennsylvania is not on the list of states fighting back to restore cursive. Where does PA stand on this?

-- What will Pennsylvania students be reading as part of the new standards? In other states sexually explicit books were part of the classroom experience. These include Time of the Butterflies, Black Swan Green and Dreaming in Cuban.

The Common Core math standards were written by three people: Bill McCallum: PhD in mathematics; Jason Zimba: PhD in mathematical physics; Phil Daro: Masters degree in English. Dr. McCallum said in 2010, "the overall standards would not be too high, certainly not in comparison other nations, including East Asia, where math education excels." Also in 2010 Dr. Zimba said, "[Common Core's] concept of college readiness is minimal and focuses on non-selective colleges." Just recently Trevor Packer, the Senior VP at the College Board in charge of its AP program, speaking at the 2013 annual conference of School Superintendents Association indicated that Common Core is less rigorous than what high schools routinely teach today and, consequently, the College Board is considering eliminating AP calculus.

The bloated Common Core program is underfunded. Local school administrators have already started complaining that the grants aren't enough to cover the requirements behind them. "We were spending a disproportionate amount of time following all the requirements," said Mike Johnson, the superintendent of Bexley schools in Ohio, which turned down the last half of a \$100,000, four-year grant this school year. "It was costing us far more than that to implement all of the mandates." How much will this unfunded mandate cost Pennsylvania school districts/taxpayers?

How will such a total rewrite of Pennsylvania's standards to require substandard learning impact our Commonwealth's children, our future ability to thrive? Can we be truly competitive on the national and international scene? Common sense tells us that the PA Core Standards are not the answer.

Sincerely,

Diane Gramley
President



**American Family Association
of
Pennsylvania**

**P.O. BOX 1048, Franklin, PA 16323 Phone: (814) 271-9078
fax: (814) 437-5432 website: www.afaofpa.org e-mail: info@afaofpa.org**

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