

Business, Education & Civic Groups Urge Governor Jindal, BESE to Stay with Common Core and Related Testing

For Immediate Release

June 13, 2014

We represent a large segment of the business, education and civic communities of Louisiana and we are today calling on Governor Jindal to act in the best interests of the children of the state and move forward with implementation of all aspects of Common Core. We are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles; we are educators and employers and engaged citizens; and we are voters and taxpayers who represent broad citizen support for the Common Core standards and appropriate tests for the betterment of both our children and our state.

Collectively we were shocked by the governor's recent statements that despite the very strong affirmation of Common Core by both the Legislature and The Board of Elementary & Secondary Education coupled with widespread citizen support, he is now singlehandedly "committed to getting us out of...Common Core."

We believe this action would constitute executive overreach that violates every aspect of the spirit of the democratic process. It would suggest that the state should be governed not by the bodies that constitutionally enact education laws and policies, but by the unilateral use of the executive pen.

Certainly, every governor has been invested with some degree of executive authority, but it should only be used as state law clearly states, "to see that the laws are faithfully executed." It was not created to make end runs to void the policies of established constitutional bodies. In the face of any executive overreach with a pen, **we ask BESE to stay firm and continue to implement Common Core standards and related tests.**

It should be stated that in enacting their policies on this important issue the Legislature and BESE followed all the rules of democratic principles. The board has taken least eight affirmative votes over a four-year period moving Louisiana gradually into Common Core standards. Every meeting was public and in the process members heard many hours of public testimony from parents, educators and interested citizens.

In 2012, the Legislature passed, and the governor signed, legislation requiring that students be tested "based on nationally recognized content standards," alluding to Common Core. This year it voted overwhelmingly to support that policy and move forward. Every step was done in public allowing for full and comprehensive debate and extended time for public testimony. The public

and its elected representatives have spoken very clearly and decisively. We do not believe the entire state, nor the students and teachers now using the standards, should be forced to veer off in another direction simply so it could be said we veered off in another direction. That is unfair to our children, our teachers and our parents and inappropriately disruptive to public education.

We are now four years into Common Core implementation. Some 4,000 teachers have been trained as Common Core experts and are helping their colleagues in their districts effectively teach their students. More than 75 Louisiana educators helped develop the PARCC student test that the governor is seeking to stop in Louisiana, and more than 50,000 students have practiced for that new test this spring. We believe a unilateral act by the governor to attempt to pull Louisiana out of Common Core and related tests would undermine, confuse and delay the teaching of our students going forward.

The governor has spoken frequently about listening to parents. We agree, he should listen to us. Because we are also here as parents, grandparents, and families who care deeply for our children. We want higher expectations for our children, we want them to be able to perform at the same levels as children in other states, and we want them to have the educational opportunities for a lifetime of success here in Louisiana. We want that now, not some ambiguous time in the future. Pulling out of Common Core only delays and denies our children better teaching and learning.

Finally, as we have said before, high educational standards are critical to the productivity and economic prosperity of our state. Governor Jindal has made workforce development a top priority and we all applaud that. But quite honestly, his insistence that we pull out of Common Core and PARCC runs counter to that. It sends a message to prospective businesses, investors, and workers that Louisiana is not committed to improving its low education rankings. And even more importantly, it constrains our children's ability to take their rightful place in a workforce that can fuel their economic success and create a future of opportunities.

Common Core is not a federal intrusion into public education in Louisiana or anywhere else. More than 40 states are moving forward on their own with higher Common Core standards. We do not want Louisiana to be left behind and remain near the bottom. We have a growing economy that demands many more highly-educated and skilled employees. Our entire education system must improve to meet those critical needs.

For these reasons, we ask as firmly and directly as possible that Governor Jindal honor what we believe are the appropriate decisions of the Legislature and BESE, put the needs of children ahead of any political or narrow special interests, and stay the course on all aspects of Common Core in Louisiana. With this approach, it will be clear that in this critical area of education his administration is leading an open, transparent and balanced state government that works as intended for all the citizens of Louisiana.

Baton Rouge Area Chamber	Jefferson Chamber of Commerce
Black Alliance for Educational Options	LA PARCC Education Leader, Judith Vail
Blueprint Louisiana	LA PARCC Education Leader, Kyle Falting
Bossier Chamber of Commerce	LA PARCC Education Leader, Sheila Banks
Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region	La Coste Consulting, LLC
Cajun Industries, LLC	Louisiana Association of Business & Industry
Center for Development and Learning	Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools
Chamber Southwest Louisiana	Louisiana Association of Teachers of Mathematics
Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans	Louisiana Core Advocates Teachers
Committee of 100 Louisiana	Louisiana Council Supervisors of Math
Committee of 100 Shreveport-Bossier	Louisiana Science Teachers Association
Council for A Better Louisiana	Monroe Chamber of Commerce
Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives, Tulane University	New Schools for Baton Rouge
Dr. James Madden, Mathematician	New Schools for New Orleans
Dr. Phillip Rozeman, Cardiologist	River Region Chamber of Commerce
Educate Now!	Robert Evans, Con-Tech International
Education's Next Horizon	Shreveport-Bossier Business Alliance for Higher Education
Fleur de Lis New Orleans Cuisine	Stand for Children Louisiana
Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce	United Way of Acadiana
Greater New Orleans, Inc.	United Way of Southeast Louisiana
Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce	Urban League of Greater New Orleans
ISC Constructors, LLC	
Jefferson Business Council	