

KANSAS  
ASSOCIATION



OF  
SCHOOL  
BOARDS



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Testimony before the  
**House Committee on Education**  
on  
**HB 2289 – Common Core Standards**

by  
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**March 21, 2013**

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on **HB 2289**. KASB appears as an opponent because we are concerned this bill could make it harder to achieve our goal of making Kansas first in the nation for college and career-ready student achievement.

KASB certainly shares concerns about increasing federal involvement in K-12 education and the cost of federal mandates. As this committee is aware, we are also deeply concerned about *state* mandates. We think most Kansans value our state tradition of local control of public schools.

However, our members also know that school districts are not islands unto themselves. Many, if not most, students will live and work in communities other than where they went to school, and in many cases, in other states. That is why the state, not just individual districts, has an economic and social interest, as well as a constitutional duty, in providing for the educational opportunity and achievement of every child. That is why the federal government also has a legitimate *interest* in K-12 education. We believe local control is not as an end to itself, but a means to achieve the state and national need for an educated citizenry.

As a result, more than 20 years ago KASB *supported* implementation of a new outcome or performance-based accreditation system designed to replace evaluating schools on inputs with evaluation based on results, even though the original promise of reducing state mandates in exchange for results based accountability never really materialized. Ten years ago, we accepted the incorporation of the federal No Child Left Behind into the school accreditation system, despite many reservations.

As KASB developed its “First in Education” program over the past two years, we were responding to at least two major themes expressed by education, parents and patrons.

First, our members enthusiastically endorsed the goal of raising education standards to increase the number of students who leave our high schools fully prepared for college, for other postsecondary training, and with workplace skills.

Second, our members believe that old No Child Left Behind has far outlived its usefulness and has become a hindrance to higher achievement.

Therefore, although KASB was not a proponent of adopting the common core standards several years ago, we strongly support many provisions of the NCLB waiver granted to Kansas last summer. That waiver is

conditioned on adopting a set of college and career-ready standards meeting certain requirements established in the waiver.

Pursuant to its constitutional duties, the State Board of Education had already adopted the common core standards, and many school districts have already begun implementing them. We have heard no objections of any of our members about quality and academic rigor of these standards. We believe they do provide a transition to a higher standard of achievement for Kansas students, moving from “basic proficiency” to attainment of skills and knowledge required for the workplace and additional education based on the needs and interest of the students.

By adopting the common core standards and other steps, Kansas was conditionally granted a waiver that allows dropping many of the requirements of NCLB, and focusing on higher standards for students, educators, schools and districts. We believe this is what school leaders, educator, parents, patrons and the Legislature supports. Our concern is the **HB 2289** which jeopardizes this effort in several ways.

First, it appears this would require starting over on an NCLB waiver, which would place Kansas schools back under the old requirements of No Child Left Behind, including the highly controversial Adequate Yearly Progress and other requirements.

Second, it would require the state to spend additional money and time to develop new academic standards, delaying implementation of higher college and career-ready standards. It is state law, not federal law, which requires regular review of academic standards.

Third, because new assessments cannot be implemented until new standards are approved, it will delay moving toward new, more rigorous student assessments.

Fourth, this will likely increase costs, because many districts have already spent considerable time and money for professional development of teachers and other staff on the common core standards. Any new set of standards will have implementation costs. New testing programs may also be more expensive. We have no reason to believe the common core standards will be more expensive than another other standards.

Fifth, it is unclear what this bill would really mean for state and local curriculum standards. We think it is highly likely any new standards would be similar to the common core standards. Would this bill apply if the State Board simply changed the name of the standards? What if the State Board chose to adopt all or most of the standards? What if local boards wanted to use all or part of the common core standards? Standards are simply expectations of what students should know and demonstrate. How can we prohibit the inclusion of common expectations for student learning? Do we really want to ban the teaching and testing of knowledge simply because it has been agreed to by other states or countries?

Finally, the bill would prohibit local school districts from spending funds to implement the common core standards. Although it is unclear exactly what this would prohibit, we would note this actually reduces local control. Neither NCLB, the waiver, nor state law requires local districts to adopt any particular standard. State standards may *guide* local teaching, but they are primarily important because state assessments are based on state standards. This bill would apparently, effectively bar local boards from setting local curriculum standards if they happen to agree with the common core.

For these reasons, we would urge the committee not to adopt this bill. We believe the committee and other legislative bodies *can and should* carefully monitor the implementation of common core standards and the other changes in the school accountability system. Much remains unknown. The State Board will have to decide on a new assessment program and determine scores for performance levels. We have not completed the educator evaluation requirements of the waiver. At some point, the federal requirements for No Child Left Behind will probably be replaced, which may require a substantial change in state policies - or could provide more freedom.

We believe it makes more sense for the Legislature to act when and if the concerns of the opponents of common core actually materialize, rather than starting over on the entire process at this point. Thank you for your consideration.