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Bill to Repeal Common Core in Alabama Heads to State Senate

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A bill that would repeal the Common Core State Standards in Alabama has cleared an education committee vote and now heads to the state Senate for debate.

SB 119, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, a Republican, states the legislation “would terminate the adoption and implementation” of Common Core, which has been rebranded in the state as the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards.

“It’s time to move in a new direction,” Marsh said, according to WSFA12 News, adding Alabama ranks 46th in the nation for reading and 49th for math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation’s Report Card.

“That pretty much tells you it’s not working,” Marsh said. “I’ll work with the education committee to come up with new standards, whatever I can do to help them. But we’ve got to give them direction.”

The bill would also require the State Board of Education to replace the current Common Core math and English Language Arts standards with standards that were “in place immediately prior to adoption of the Common Core Standards, pending the adoption of new standards by the board.”

The legislation also seeks to “protect state and local control of education by restricting the State Board of Education from adopting or implementing any other national standards from any source or requiring the use of any assessments aligned with them.”

According to a report at WVTM13, Jefferson County School Superintendent Dr. Craig Pouncey opposed the bill to repeal Common Core.

“The Common Core bill is nothing more than political pandering that is intended to appease a certain segment of the people who don’t even want to know the facts,” he said. “If in fact this bill were to pass, it would set our state back and jeopardize our children’s future at least 20 years.”

However, in November, an education analyst who examined the effects of Common Core said the K-12 Obama-era school reform is the “worst large-scale educational failure in 40 years.”

Ted Rebarber of AccountabilityWorks observed the danger when politicians succumb to the allure of standards-based education reforms.

“Standards become the blueprint around which schools organize their teaching, their day-to-day academic operations,” he said. “They’re effectively curriculum central planning by government.”

In a study published at Pioneer Institute, Rebarber and Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey observed that since Common Core was implemented in 45 states and Washington, DC, students have demonstrated sharp drops in academic performance. Additionally, those students who were already performing poorly— many of them minority students – declined even further.

As expected, business leaders in Alabama are opposing the push to end Common Core in the state, saying the legislation would mean “dumbing down” Alabama, reported al.com.

Over the last decade, parent activist groups battling against Common Core in their respective states have met with substantial resistance from both Republican and Democrat governors and state lawmakers in their quest to repeal them. Political pressure from big business groups, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce – a major supporter of Common Core – and the threat of having federal funds pulled from their states, led most state lawmakers and governors to dismiss parental concerns.

In a letter to state senators, the leaders of the chambers of commerce in Alabama wrote:

The voices of business and industry for the State of Alabama have united in support of rigorous education standards that will ensure that our students are college and career ready when they graduate from high school. The Alabama standards are the cornerstone of the state's Plan 2020 to increase graduation rates, reduce college remediation and raise student achievement.

Common Core was a federally promoted education initiative introduced in the Obama administration's 2009 stimulus bill through a competitive grant program called Race to the Top. States could apply and compete for federal grant money and waivers from federal regulations as long as they adopted a set of uniform standards and aligned curricula, agreed to a massive system of student data collection, and signed onto teacher evaluations that would be based on student performance on assessments aligned with the standards.

The standards were developed by three private organizations in Washington D.C.: the National Governors Association (NGA), the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and education company Achieve Inc. All three organizations were privately funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In January, Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis announced an executive order to eliminate Common Core – rebranded in his state as the Florida Standards.

“So, let's try to get this right,” DeSantis said, citing the frustration of parents in Florida. “We want to be very high quality, we want to demand excellence, but I think we want to do that in a way that's responsive to some of the concerns we've had over the many number of years.”