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THE SENATE
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SENATOR TODD KAMINSKY
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

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November 14, 2016

MaryEllen Elia
NYS Commissioner of Education
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

**Re: Public Comment on New Draft NYS English Language and
Mathematics Learning Standards**

Dear Commissioner Elia,

I am writing to comment on the new draft learning standards released by the New York State Education Department (“NYSED”) for students from grades Pre-K to 12.

While I greatly appreciate the efforts made by the committee to revise the New York State Common Core learning standards, the revisions do not adequately address the concerns stated by both school officials and parents. There has been a great deal of criticism and controversy surrounding the Common Core standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics since they were implemented in 2012. Much of this scrutiny has been voiced by concerned teachers and parents because the standards have proven to be set at inappropriate levels for students and fail to adequately assess their abilities. While your department’s new revisions are a small step toward addressing the plethora of concerns around the flawed Common Core standards, there remain many unresolved issues.

I respectfully request that you consider the following:

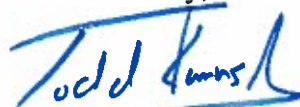
- **Revise Anchor Standards** – The Anchor Standards implemented in Common Core remain the same under your revised learning standards and reflected a rigid adherence to the original standards. By failing to revise these standards, the Task Force has done nothing to substantially reform this broken system.



- **Address Cause of Testing Opt Out** – From Long Island’s 106 school districts, nearly 88,000 students opted out of Common Core math testing in April 2016, representing 52.8% of eligible students. The revised standards do nothing to address the reason why students and parents have chosen to opt-out of Common Core tests. Lessening the number of testing days from three to two, for instance, should be considered.
- **Increase Transparency** – It is imperative that NYSED and the Task Force release all dissenting opinions regarding the yearlong review. Releasing this information will help shed sunlight on the procedure used to make the new revisions. Concerns of parents and educators as outlined in Governor Cuomo’s Common Core Task Force Report are not reflected in the revised standards. For example, the Task Force detailed the concerns of early childhood experts about the developmentally inappropriate expectation that kindergarteners “read emergent texts with purpose and understanding,” but this standard still remains in the draft revisions. Making the process more transparent would help reduce the public outcry and reassure the people that their voices were not neglected.
- **Remove the One Size Fits All Standard** – Under the revised standards, teachers will be forced to teach the standards to the child, regardless of the child’s ability. By teaching to the standards and not the students, we have seen that students’ abilities to learn and comprehend concepts is dramatically stifled and undermined. Further, in breaking the State’s “one size fits all” standard, I implore NYSED to expand diploma options so that every deserving student is given the chance to pursue their dreams.

New York’s students are our future, and we should do everything in our power to help them achieve their full potential. I stand ready to work with NYSED, parents, teachers and school districts to provide our students with the highest quality education possible. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Kaminsky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Todd Kaminsky
Senator, 9th District