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# United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

March 10, 2015

Dear Colleague,

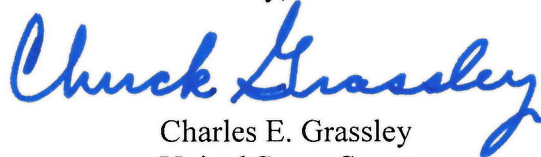
I invite you to join me in signing the attached letter to the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee supporting language to block the U.S. Department of Education from interfering with state decisions on academic content standards.

While the Common Core State Standards Initiative was initially billed as a voluntary effort between states, heavy-handed federal incentives have put undue pressure on state decision makers. The U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTTT) Program provided that for a state to have a reasonable chance to compete for funding, it must adopt a "common set of K-12 standards" matching the description of the Common Core within a two month window after the final release of the Common Core standards.

The push by the U.S. Department of Education to get states to adopt the Common Core standards in such a short timeframe preempted an important public debate about the standards, which is now happening at the state level throughout the country. Unfortunately, this debate continues to be hampered by the U.S. Department of Education making adoption of "college- and career-ready standards" a condition to receive a waiver under the No Child Left Behind Act, with the Common Core standards being the only option that is effectively preapproved by the Department. The risk of losing a waiver combined with the possibility that future federal funds might also come with similar strings continues to restrain state level decision making.

All of these factors amount to inappropriate federal interference with decisions that are properly made at the state and local levels, closer to the children affected and their parents. Regardless of how different senators feel about the standards themselves, there should be broad, bipartisan agreement that federal coercion in this area is inappropriate and should stop. I support including strong language to permanently end federal interference in setting state content standards in any legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In the meantime, Congress can end this overreach by the U.S. Department of Education by using its power of the purse to block further funding being used for such purposes. The proposed language in the attached letter would do just that and I ask for your support. If you would like to co-sign this letter, please contact James Rice of my staff by close of business on March 26, 2015.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

Committee Assignments:

AGRICULTURE  
BUDGET  
FINANCE

CO-CHAIRMAN,  
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS  
CONTROL CAUCUS

CHAIRMAN,  
JUDICIARY

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We ask that the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill include language to restore state decision-making and accountability with respect to state academic content standards. The decision about what students should be taught and when it should be taught has enormous consequences for our children. Therefore, parents ought to have a straight line of accountability to those who are making such decisions. Those decisions should be made at the state or local level, free from any pressure from the U.S. Department of Education.

We support eliminating further interference by the U.S. Department of Education with respect to state decisions on academic content standards by including the following language in the Fiscal Year 2016 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill:

(a) In General.—Funds appropriated under this Act or any prior Act shall not be used by the Secretary of Education—

(1) to require a State or local educational agency to develop or implement any set of academic content standards common to multiple States, including the Common Core State Standards developed under the Common Core State Standards Initiative, or any other specified set or type of academic content standards selected by the Secretary, or assessments aligned with such standards, including as a condition of approval of a State plan submitted to the Secretary, an application for a waiver issued by such Secretary under section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7861), or as a condition of approval or competitive preference for an award of Federal funds under any grant, contract, or cooperative agreement;

(2) to establish any criterion that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards or measures that a State or local educational agency uses to establish, implement, or improve academic content standards, academic achievement standards, academic assessments, accountability systems, systems that measure student growth, measures of other academic indicators, or teacher and principal evaluation systems; or

(3) to award any grant, contract, or cooperative agreement to a consortium of States that requires or specifically authorizes the development of assessments aligned with any set of academic content standards common to multiple States, including the Common Core State Standards developed under the Common Core State Standards Initiative, or any other specified set or type of academic content standards selected by the Secretary.

(b) Rule of Construction.—Nothing in subsection (a) shall be construed to limit the discretion

of an individual State or local education agency to use funds provided through a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement that does not otherwise violate subsection (a) for any purpose consistent with the terms of the grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, including the development or implementation of any set of content standards, assessments, or curricula that the State or local educational agency chooses to develop or implement without regard to a Federal requirement or incentive.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

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