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**Statement for New Hampshire State Education Committee Hearing HB 1508-FN
Concord, New Hampshire
February 20, 2014**

Dear Honorable Members of the House Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to the New Hampshire House Education Committee regarding House Bill 1508-FN terminating state participation in the common core educational standards. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the public hearing reconvened from February 13, 2014. Please accept this in the public record as my testimony.

My name is Diane Pauer, and I am the parent of a High Honor roll and National Honor Society student who is currently a junior at Hollis-Brookline High School (HBHS). Additionally, I have a son who graduated from HBHS and is a sophomore at the University of New Hampshire at Durham studying civil engineering technology and construction management. I earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, *summa cum laude*, from Worcester Polytechnic Institute; and my husband earned a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering, *summa cum laude*, from Northeastern University. Both my husband and I highly value a rigorous and quality education for our children as it is a critical factor which we firmly believe enables our children to become self-sufficient, thriving, contributing members of our society. As such, we are keenly involved in our childrens' education.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a set of educational standards that the NH Board of Education adopted on July 8, 2010. The motion was adopted by a 4 – 1 vote with Chairman Lyons voting in the negative citing he had significant concerns over the process.

"Motion: the State Board of Education adopt in principle the final draft of the Common Core State Standards, and that the Department of Education commit to a thoughtful, orderly transition process for implementation and assessment to ensure that all New Hampshire students experience a successful and productive future. The State Board of Education will expect regular reports from the Department on the progress of implementation as we move forward."

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The State of NH is now three and one half years down the road in the implementation of CCSS. Today, I would like to share with you what those standards look like in the classroom.

This academic year (2013-2014) at Hollis Brookline High School I immediately noticed something remarkably different. There were significant changes in a number of areas compared to previous years. Most notably, curriculum had changed to address the educational standards under Common Core. Several course subjects including Algebra II, Chemistry, and English were using brand new "Common Core" textbooks. Moreover, the daily schedule at the high school has changed to accommodate "Response to Intervention (RTI)," a Common Core mechanism used to provide students with the additional supports in an attempt to achieve the CCSS performance measures. Most significantly and most problematic is that instruction in the classroom had been radically altered due to Common Core. As a result of these instructional changes, my daughter has been forced to spend more and more time outside of the classroom doing schoolwork, much of which had been previously accomplished during school hours in past years prior to the CCSS implementation.

It is evident that the teachers are actually doing significantly less teaching during class time. Instead, the teachers are using discovery learning and student-led teaching methodologies which are part of the Common Core approach to learning. The students are forced to independently discover how concepts work themselves. For example, in my daughter's Chemistry class, the students were split into small groups of four, and then told to figure out the relationships between atomic mass, the mole, and Avogadro's number so they could then complete a packet of worksheets of complex problems. The teacher had not covered these advanced concepts—and the result was a complete disaster. When my daughter came home from school that day, my husband and I had to teach her chemistry that evening in order for her to learn what she should have been taught in class so she could complete the assignment which was due the next day. This is a common practice in Chemistry. Most recently, students in this Chemistry class were given a packet of worksheets on a Monday covering numerous new topics not yet taught nor introduced by the teacher. The students were told that the packet was due on Friday. They were also instructed to complete the packet by working inside the classroom both independently as well as in small groups, in addition to working on it alone at home.

Similarly, in Algebra II, the Common Core approach used by the teacher employs a novel grading scheme referred to as "grade by lottery". Students were again put into small groups and given a challenging Common Core problem set in which Algebra II concepts are "applied to real world problems". A recent Algebra II word problem began with "Your company manufactures doorstops for washed up celebrities ...". This is hardly a "real world" or meaningful application in my estimation. Nevertheless, this wording greatly confused my National Honor Society student as she had absolutely no idea what this "real world" company was making and why. The student groups were allowed to work

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together for a prescribed amount of time in class, and then they were assigned the remainder of the problem set as homework to complete outside of class. Each student was required to complete all of the problems and provide a detailed solution write-up following a quality rubric. The next day, the students were permitted to briefly meet with their group members before the teacher collected the assignment. The teacher then randomly selected one student's write-up from the group, the lottery, and *all* students in that group received the grade given to the arbitrarily selected write-up. All other student's write-ups from the group were not evaluated by the teacher. This creates an ethical dilemma, especially when the group has students with different work principles and/or abilities. On one occasion, one student in my daughter's group simply did not do the assignment. When the teacher and the administration were questioned about this unfair grading practice, we were told that this is "21st Century learning and collaboration".

Lastly, in U.S. History, the students are routinely assigned significant and lengthy reading and open ended assignments on novel topics so that the students can then be questioned by the teacher the next day in class. The teacher does not teach U.S. History herself—the teacher just queries the students, hunting for answers during class time. As a result, students in that classroom have to take notes based on the responses of their peers in the classroom, with the teacher *sometimes* correcting student responses when the information is incorrect or not perhaps what the teacher is thinking in her mind. Hence, mindreading is a valuable skill in U.S. History. Consequently, in order for a student to be successful, one must learn all of the material independently outside of class. This new approach is not only ineffective, but it's also very inefficient. By midyear my daughter's class had only covered topics up to the Spanish American War of 1898, when they should have completed topics through the Roaring Twenties to the Great Depression according to the school's curriculum pace. Moreover, in this class my daughter received an A- on a particularly difficult unit exam and was not able to keep her grade because most of the class had done poorly! The majority of the class decided by vote that the exam would not count, and instead it would be replaced with a *group* video project on the same material. Both my daughter and my husband inquired if my daughter could keep her grade and not have to do the video project for the makeup grade, but such request was denied by the teacher as well as high school administration. Consequently, my daughter's Christmas vacation was spent largely on doing this unnecessary *group* video project. She spent a total of 40.5 hours on this project alone. The three other group members expended similar effort. Apparently, if you like your test grade, you can't keep it under Common Core. My daughter's experience in U.S. History had deteriorated to the point that she was no longer able to remain in that classroom under that teacher due to the detrimental learning environment created by both the teacher and Common Core. As a result, she was compelled to withdraw from the class at the high school and finish U.S. History through the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS). Essentially, she has been forced out of the classroom with her peers to complete an independent study in U.S. History online.

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Ironically, science and history are not yet part of Common Core, but teachers are already adopting this disastrous approach to teaching across many subjects beyond English and Math. After much unnecessary pain, anguish and stress, my A+, National Honor Society student tearfully told my husband and me, "I just want to learn in a real classroom with my peers and be taught by a teacher. Is that too much to ask for?" The sad part is that she has one and a half years before she graduates from high school in June of 2015, and I don't see things getting any better in the classroom any time soon. Understand that each and every child in these classrooms under Common Core has had similar negative experiences. I am greatly troubled by this fact. I do however have great trust and faith that as elected members of the House Education Committee you will look beyond the standards prescribed by Common Core and see clearly the damage that is being done in the classrooms and in the hearts and minds of our students as a result of these untested and unverified standards adopted three and a half years ago by five appointed members of the NH Board of Education.

Please issue an Ought to Pass (OTP) recommendation for HB 1508-FN for the sake of our students and for the future of education in the state of New Hampshire.

Thank you in advance for your time and careful consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Pauer