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KEEP ACADEMIC STANDARDS HIGH FOR NORTH CAROLINA'S CHILDREN: Don't Abandon Common Core

House Bill 1061 & Senate Bill 812

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- **Broad agreement exists that Common Core standards are an improvement over the previous set of standards.**
 - **Any legislation must protect, not undermine, these high academic standards.**
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Senate Bill 812 (House Bill 1061) would create an Academic Standards Review Commission tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of North Carolina's academic standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, recommending changes to these standards to the State Board of Education, and recommending assessments aligned to the standards. It is vital to the future of the state's children that the Commission modify rather than replace or abandon the Common Core Standards that are currently in place in order to: 1) avoid reverting to the inferior set of standards that were in place in North Carolina prior to the adoption of the Common Core, and 2) keep standards consistent to avoid disruption, instability, inconsistency, and the loss of the vast amount of resources that have been allocated to put the Common Core standards into place.

One provision in Section 3 of Senate Bill 812 puts the immediate future of our state's academic standards in doubt. This provision prohibits the State Board of Education from continuing to participate in the development of the Common Core State Standards or implementing the assessments that the State Board deems most appropriate to assess student achievement on the Common Core State Standards. At the same time, the bill keeps the Common Core Standards in place until a new set of standards is adopted by the State Board of Education following the receipt of the Commission's recommendations. In other words, North Carolina will continue to move forward with the Common Core Standards but the state may be prohibited from revising or implementing assessments or offering professional development and training for teachers and administrators who are responsible for educating students to these standards.

Common Core Standards Are Superior to North Carolina's Standard Course of Study

The Common Core Standards adopted in North Carolina are more rigorous, raise expectations and student achievement, and provide a clearer set of standards than the North Carolina Standard Course of Study that was in place prior to the adoption of the Common Core Standards in 2010. Organizations from across the ideological spectrum, including the John Locke Foundation, the Fordham Institute, the National Education Association, and the North Carolina Association of Educators, agree that the Common Core Standards are an improvement over the previous set of standards. Under the North Carolina Standard Course of Study,

students were deemed proficient based on lower standards even though they needed intensive remediation to become college or career ready.

Under the Common Core Standards, students who meet the proficiency benchmark will be truly college and career ready. The Common Core Standards are aligned with international testing benchmarks and were designed with input from the business community and institutions of higher education to ensure students are prepared with the skills that colleges, universities, and business require. They are supported by the North Carolina Chamber and the Department of Public Instruction, and have been aligned with expectations, standards, and assessments in the Community College and University of North Carolina systems.

Keep Standards Consistent for Teachers, Administrators, and Students

In June, 2010, the North Carolina State Board of Education voted to adopt the Common Core Standards to replace the previous standards under the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Since that time, North Carolina has spent millions of dollars and held literally thousands of regional trainings and professional development events for teachers across the state to educate teachers, student support personnel, and administrators on how to use the new standards.

The current school year is the first year that the Common Core Standards have been in place, and there have been some expected implementation difficulties that accompany this type of large scale change. Teachers need time, professional development, and the benefit of experience to tailor curricula to the Common Core's higher standards. These standards should be revised and made even more rigorous over the next 3-5 years, but should not be abandoned and replaced with an entirely new set of standards or North Carolina's schools, teachers, and students will face further uncertainty, expense, and implementation challenges associated with jettisoning the standards to which we hold the state's 1.4 million public school students.

The Common Core is not a set curriculum but rather a set of standards that raises the expectations we have for our students while allowing teachers to have the flexibility to teach creative problem solving and analytical thinking. Abandoning these higher standards would send the message that North Carolina's children do not have to live up to the highest standards. This would deeply harm the teaching profession.

High standards and expectations for students raise student achievement. All of the countries that are outperforming the United States on international assessments have a clear set of high standards for their students. Massachusetts aggressively raised its standards in the 1990s and is now the highest performing state on national assessments. It is also the only state that regularly outcompetes the highest performing nations in the world on international benchmarking tests.

During the public hearing on Common Core, teachers like Karen Dickerson, a Guilford County English teacher and 2013 Teacher of the Year, said Common Core allowed her to dive more deeply into topics with all of her students, particularly those that had been struggling: "We are simply raising the floor or baseline for what they must achieve, so the ceiling can reach limitless heights." Raising standards and expectations for students is a monumental challenge, but it is a challenge that North Carolina must meet to ensure that our children are ready for college and entrance into the workforce. If the state is to remain economically competitive in the future, we must protect high academic standards.

