

February 5, 2014

Honorable Mary Stuart Gile  
Chair  
House Education Committee  
New Hampshire General Court

Dear Chairwoman Gile:

I am writing in my capacity as CEO of Northeast Delta Dental, the Chairman of the New Hampshire State Board of Education and also the Co-Chair of the Business and Education Coalition to express my strong support for the New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards, including the English Language Arts and Math portions based on the Common Core State Standards. And I have great confidence that the Smarter Balanced test will meet the needs of educators as they use this assessment as one measure of student achievement.

Northeast Delta Dental relies, as do other major New Hampshire corporations, on New Hampshire public education at all levels. We require critical thinkers who can engage our customers in a literate and confident way and solve problems that require strong foundation knowledge and a range of math, statistical and writing skills. With the adoption of the Common Core standards, New Hampshire companies can be confident that our educators share that goal.

The State Board of Education endorsed the Common Core State Standards in 2010 after years of work by NHDOE alongside their peers in other states. The Department and hundreds of New Hampshire teachers reviewed each draft of the standards in detail and provided feedback that we then saw reflected in subsequent drafts. We felt as if we had a strong voice in the development of the new standards.

Now, after years of committed work by teachers and district leadership getting the new standards into classrooms across the State, teachers are seeing the benefits and we hear strong support from all corners of New Hampshire. Our educators see the Common Core as a major step forward for New Hampshire children.

Northeast Delta Dental applauds the dedicated work of our New Hampshire educators in putting these improved standards to work in the classroom for our students.

I am aware, as we all are, of the controversy surrounding the standards and the difficulties some states have had in implementing the standards in a way that benefits children. That is why I am all the more proud of our accomplishments here in New Hampshire.

Thomas Raffio, FLMI  
President & CEO  
Northeast Delta Dental  
One Delta Drive  
PO Box 2002  
Concord, NH 03302-2002

Telephone: 603-223-1000  
Fax: 603-223-1299  
E-mail: TomRaffio@nedelta.com



Our NCLB waiver, negotiated over many months with the support of the Legislature, our teachers, their unions and our superintendents, gave us the flexibility we need to implement the new standards and the required annual assessments in a way that supports teachers and learning. We have avoided the high stakes approach taken by other states. In the first two years, there is no federal requirement that the annual tests play any role at all in teacher evaluation. After that, while student performance must be part of the evaluation in Title I schools, the annual assessment need only be a minimal part of that performance assessment. These kinds of decisions continue to be left to the local school districts.

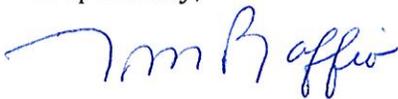
New Hampshire plays a lead role in the management of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. I was gratified to see that the major study comparing all available Common Core annual assessments undertaken by the Michigan Department of Education showed that the Smarter Balanced assessment was clearly superior to the alternatives. It is the only assessment that is computer-adaptive, leading to a much more useful result. Its data security protocols are strong. And the test is flexible enough to be customized to New Hampshire's needs.

My commitment to you is that the Smarter Balanced assessment will provide our teachers a valuable part of the feedback they need as they develop their new Common Core based lesson plans. We are fortunate to have selected and helped develop the right assessment solution for New Hampshire children.

In closing, I would like to convey to you the unanimous support for the Common Core voted by the New Hampshire Coalition for Business & Education, a group I Co-Chair with Fred Kocher to help business leaders and educators work together.

Thank you for the attention and care you are investing in this important issue. I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Respectfully,



Thomas Raffio  
President & CEO  
Northeast Delta Dental  
Chairman, New Hampshire State Board of Education  
Co-Chair, Business and Education Coalition