



Thank you, Chairman Diegnan and members of the Assembly Education Committee, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Education Law Center in support of A3081. My name is Stan Karp, and I am the Director of the Secondary Reform Project at ELC.

ELC supports passage of A3081 for two major reasons:

1. This legislation provides an opportunity to address unexamined and highly significant resource issues.

NJ's adoption and implementation of state curriculum standards has always been closely tied to efforts to equitably fund our public schools. The Core Content Curriculum Standards adopted in 1996 were accepted by the NJ Supreme Court as part of the "thorough and efficient" education guaranteed by the State Constitution. The current school funding formula, the SFRA, endorsed by the Court as the State's first constitutionally adequate formula, is based in large part on studies of the programs, staff and services required to provide all students with an opportunity to achieve those state standards.

To date, however, there have not been any studies of the programs and services required to effectively implement the Common Core's "college and career ready" standards in New Jersey, and provide all students with the opportunity to achieve them. Moreover, the new PARCC tests designed to assess student mastery and school delivery of the new standards are not yet fully in

place and have raised their own unanswered questions about the cost of delivering these new computer-based exams.

It's also relevant to note that recent State budgets have not provided the funding necessary to deliver existing standards. Between FY10 and FY14, the standards-based SFRA formula has been underfunded statewide by some \$5 billion dollars. Next year that number will rise to \$6 billion, and the number of districts spending less than the minimum "adequacy budget" called for in the SFRA statute will be over 300, more than half the districts in the state.

Raising standards without providing, or even identifying, the resources needed to deliver them sets schools and students up for frustration and failure instead of success. The proposal in A3081 to create a Task Force to produce "an estimate of the full cost for school districts to implement the common core state standards" and to administer the PARCC exams addresses a basic pre-requisite for successful implementation of any new standards and testing regime.

2. The increased stakes attached to PARCC results is another reason to revisit the timelines and policies that govern their use.

Assessment results are increasingly being used to make major decisions about educators, schools, students, and districts. As the State transitions to the PARCC exams, it is especially appropriate for the Legislature to review the policies governing use of the results for accountability purposes. We would urge the proposed Task Force to examine the uses of PARCC

results for everything from educator evaluation to School Performance Reports to student transcripts to the state's categorization of priority and focus schools under the NCLB waiver.

The use of the new PARCC high school tests for accountability purposes should also be reviewed by the Task Force. Although the Department of Education has reportedly proposed suspending the current high school graduation test requirement during the transition to PARCC, a proposal ELC supports, it has not yet put forward specific regulations to implement this policy. Many in NJ are not aware that PARCC will require a major increase in standardized testing at the high school level with the introduction of six new PARCC exams, each with multiple parts. In place of the language arts and math portions of the HSPA, which students currently are required to take in 11th grade, PARCC will require students to take language arts exams in grades 9, 10 and 11 and math exams in Algebra I and II and Geometry. Current regulations require that students and their families be given clear information about state graduation requirements when they enter freshman year, but it is difficult for districts to provide reliable information while uncertainty persists about how these new tests may be used on transcripts, for course credit and other purposes.

For all these reasons, ELC urges the committee to adopt A3801 and establish a Task Force that can review many of the unresolved issues raised by the implementation of Common Core standards and tests. ELC would be glad to assist the Task Force in its work going forward. Thank you.