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February 21, 2014

Dear Chair Chartrand:

The Florida Council of 100 has long advocated the adoption of the highest academic standards available for Florida's students and made the achievement of such one of its top public policy priorities. On Tuesday, February 18, the State Board of Education made this a reality by unanimously approving the Florida Standards.

The Council of 100 thanks and commends Commissioner Pam Stewart and the State Board of Education not only for this singular action but also the deliberate process of gathering input and analysis from parents, educators, experts, and members of the business community, which separated wheat from chaff and led to a better final product. Governor Scott's foresight to set such events in motion has resulted in a body of work that Florida can truly call its own.

Most of all, though, Commissioner Stewart and the State Board of Education should be congratulated for keeping a laser-like focus on what matters most – the children. It was evident on Tuesday, just as it has been for months on this issue, that the Board is able to turn down the static, weigh both the short-term and long-term success of Florida's students, and implement sound public policy.

Similarly, the Council of 100 commends Commissioner Stewart and the Board for their development and consideration of a simplified, more transparent school grading process. It lays a firm foundation for accountability in the state and provides a clear path forward. Over the past decade, such an accountability system has been vital to demonstrating student progress and success in a wide variety of areas to include Hispanic student scores, AP participation and performance, African American student scores, reading scores, math scores, science scores, reading at grade level, graduation rates and, thus, incentives for continuous improvement. A clear, comprehensive school grading formula is a key component of generating positive academic leadership for generations of Floridians.

While adoption of the Florida Standards and the issuance of the new school grading formula may represent a procedural end of sorts, please understand that the Council of 100 stands ready to assist on this and other educational issues as they might arise. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any thoughts or questions.

Sincerely,

Steven T. Halverson

CC: Governor Rick Scott
State Board of Education Members
Commissioner Pam Stewart