

December 23, 2003

Governor Jeb Bush  
PL 05 The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Jeb:

We've reviewed the accelerated graduation legislation from last year's session, and we find ourselves in disagreement. As business leaders who have been involved in numerous public policy issues over many years, we have worked with the Governor, the legislature and other business groups to improve the quality of education for all Floridians. That is why we in the Council of 100 now feel the quality of education is being reduced by the 2003 legislation allowing students to graduate from high school with 18 credits. We believe the accelerated graduation program sends the message to our high school students that "civics" is no longer important.

Allowing students to graduate from high school with the option of taking only 18-credits, without requiring them to take such critical courses as American history, American government, economics, or world history, will result in graduates ill-prepared to be contributing citizens of our state and country. Additionally, many students are not prepared academically or emotionally for college life, and will miss out on the life and learning experiences gained during high school's senior year, in addition to leaving school without a good foundation in citizenship.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, no other state has tried a similar program. While we have supported many Florida model programs, we believe it is unwise for Florida to continue this program that will be detrimental to many students. If the intent is to move students out of high school faster, programs already exist that allow the accumulation of 24 credits in three years. If the intent is to get students into college earlier, programs already exist that allow high school students to take college and community college level courses. Additionally, college remediation rates suggest that many high school students are not receiving all of the basic skills they need for college. We believe it is far more important that our students be required to take the basic, minimum courses that are necessary to be good citizens, well prepared for college or work life.

The Council of 100 does not want our education system to shortchange Florida's children. We hope that you and the legislature will repeal the accelerated graduation program so that Floridians can be assured that all students will receive the basic, though critical, courses they need to succeed beyond high school.

Sincerely,

Chris Sullivan  
Chairman  
(Chairman & CEO, Outback Steakhouse)

Leerie Jenkins  
Teacher Quality Task Force Chair  
(Chairman & CEO, Reynolds, Smith and Hills)

cc: President King, Speaker Byrd, Chairman Handy, Commissioner Horne, Chancellor Warford