



September 26, 2014

Mr. Gary Chartrand  
Chair  
State Board of Education  
325 W. Gaines Street  
Suite 1520  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Chair Chartrand:

The Florida Council of 100 has always asserted that the single most important thing Florida can do is develop a world-class workforce infrastructure so our citizens have the career tools they need to compete and prosper in the ever-changing global economy. Florida's academic success over the past 15 years has been profound, moving Florida from a bottom performing to top performing educational system. The centerpiece of that success is a durable commitment to rigorous standards and meaningful assessment. In these, Florida has become a national leader. We especially commend the State Board of Education for the most recent reform, the Florida Standards, which are researched-based, the most rigorous available, and designed by a diverse group of educators, experts, and parents from Florida and beyond.

But standards without assessment accomplish little. We must have the right assessment tools to ensure that our students are learning the standards. Testing is difficult but vital. Being able to learn and absorb information and then reflect that knowledge on a test is crucial preparation for any career. The Florida Standards Assessment will challenge students to think critically (like employees in the workplace), rather than relying on rote memorization.

We are acutely aware of the growing debate around assessments. We are sympathetic to the challenges of introducing new standards and implementing a statewide assessment system. It will be hard work, and our school districts and teachers deserve our full support. We understand there are times when accountability systems must be flexible to remain aligned with educational reforms. For this reason, the Council of 100 fully supports designating the 2014-15 school year as a measurement baseline and holding schools harmless from accountability penalties during that time. However, we strongly oppose the extension of the hold harmless provisions beyond the 2014-15 school year unless district education leaders can conclusively demonstrate that further extension is in the best interests of our students. Further delay risks a loss of momentum, deprives students

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and parents of needed assessment data, and risks undermining the tremendous progress we have made as a state.

The global economy is reordering itself and the competition for talent is the driver of future prosperity. Successful implementation of the Florida Standards and development of competent assessment tools is Florida's greatest opportunity to position our state – and our children – for a future of prosperity and opportunity. We must not fail.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Council can be of assistance as Florida's new standards, assessments, and accountability measures are implemented.

Sincerely,

Steven T. Halverson  
Chairman

cc: Mr. John Padgett, member, State Board of Education  
Dr. Ada Armas, member, State Board of Education  
Mr. John Colon, member, State Board of Education  
Ms. Marva Johnson, member, State Board of Education  
Ms. Rebecca Fishman Lipsey, member, State Board of Education  
Mr. Andy Tuck, member, State Board of Education  
The Honorable Rick Scott, Governor, State of Florida  
The Honorable Will Weatherford, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives  
The Honorable Don Gaetz, President, Florida Senate  
The Honorable Steve Crisafulli, Speaker-Designate, Florida House of Representatives  
The Honorable Andy Gardiner, President-Designate, Florida Senate



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**The Honorable John Legg, Chair, Committee on Education,  
Florida Senate**

**The Honorable Marlene O'Toole, Chair, Education Committee,  
Florida House of Representatives**

**The Honorable Janet Adkins, Chair, K-12 Subcommittee, Florida  
House of Representatives**

**Ms. Pam Stewart, Commissioner, Florida Department of  
Education**