

EXHIBIT 18
DATE 2-18-15
NO 377

Good afternoon madam chairperson members of this committee.

I am Dr. Chris Olszewski, the Director of Curriculum & Instruction for Great Falls Public Schools. I've been in that position for the last seven years, and prior to that I was the director of the Golden Triangle Curriculum Cooperative which does curriculum work for over 50 small school districts across the state of Montana. I'm here to speak in opposition to House Bills 377 and 501.

The key concern of these bills is a concern over a federal takeover of our local school district's curriculum as a result of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) framework. This couldn't be further from the truth in the community of Great Falls. I am here to testify that we have a system that does work and does not need additional governmental oversight. Montana's revision of its content standards to reflect the CCSS framework did not change any of the current accreditation laws that require for local committee of teachers, administrators, parents, students and school board members to define what students need to know, understand, and be able to do on a local-level.

State and national standards are not a curriculum, and the use of these standards is not new. For decades, we have used state and national standards for guidance in all content areas and disciplines. For the majority of the core content areas, we have state standards. However, in many other disciplines where there are no direct state standards, we utilize national standards: agricultural, medical occupations, counseling and technology to name a few. When we open up the 90+ pages of the national FFA standards to define our local curriculum – no one cries foul. This is because our local school district, through an open and public process, brings forward the very best curricular decisions to our elected board of trustees for the final decision.

You must recognize that current accreditation law requires that we take the state standards and through local committees, we develop the curriculum at each grade level. Textbooks are also not the curriculum, but a resource that the local board of trustees is responsible for adoption and providing based on local decision-making to provide for a free and equitable public education.

In 2006-2007, I participated in OPI's committee to develop the current Montana Science Standards. The state-level process worked then. In 2010, I was among over 50 educators who came together here in Helena, and after three days of careful analysis and study of the common core framework, the consensus from both the English Language Arts and mathematics committees was the recommendation to Superintendent Juneau that we take a closer look for further conversation and consideration. That is what happened over the next year as various public surveys and meetings by both OPI and the BPE occurred. Once the BPE adopted the new Montana Content Standards, Great Falls Public Schools initiated our local committees as mentioned earlier.

I have worked with these new Montana Content Standards for the last five years and I agree with Rep. Nancy Ballance who, after reading through them all, stated "I don't find evil" when interviewed by the Ravalli Republic. I also agree with her when she said that the place to deal with the concerns of common core is not at the legislative level but locally. Endorsement of these bills is an endorsement of more government. The creation of additional oversight is not the route we want to take in Montana, and we need to allow for local process to work - where teachers, administrators, parents, students and school board members work together to determine local curriculum. We don't need new legislation to effectively make that happen.

The requirement that districts would default back to standards that were in use prior to July 1, 2013, would require district to default back to Montana standards that received an "F" rating from the 2010 Thomas B. Fordham Foundation analysis titled *The State of the State Standards*. See the following link: http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/SOSSandCC2010_FullReportFINAL_8.pdf

I urge you to vote "no" on HB 377 and 501 because to support them is to support bigger government. Please allow the local control process that is already required by state law to work.

Madame Chairperson, committee members - Thank you, for your time.