RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

September 23, 2013

Secretary Arne Duncan
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, Southwest
Washington, District of Columbia 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Floridians work hard each day to make Florida the best state to find a great job, get a quality education and build a family, and we know that continued growth and innovation in our state depends on the ability of our students to compete with their peers around the globe. We also know that in order to accomplish this, Florida students need the highest academic standards to achieve more in-depth understanding of concepts in reading, writing and math.

In 2010, the Florida State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics, after a process designed to continue the development of Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. This process began under former Governor Jeb Bush and continued in legislation that came from former Speaker Marco Rubio as an effort to make sure that all of our students in all of our schools were given the tools to succeed. This process resulted in the highest academic standards that could move our students and teachers away from "teaching to the test" and toward a more independent, analytical approach to reading, writing and math. It is the application of analytical skills that will lead them toward the type of problem solving they will need to ensure success in college and in their careers. The provision of these standards is a fundamental duty of our state government, while the operation, control and supervision of our schools remains, as the Florida Constitution directs, the purview of our local school boards.

Florida has participated in the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) over the past few years with the goal of assessing students' abilities to master these critical skills. In recent months, however, the debate over how to best accomplish this has devolved into whether Floridians and all Americans are simply "for Common Core" or "against Common Core," with federal government involvement in PARCC a central part of the problem for states.

Unfortunately today, PARCC has become a primary entry point for the involvement of the federal government in many of these state and local decisions. The federal government, however, has absolutely no constitutional authority to involve itself in the state-level decisions on academic standards and assessments or the curriculum and instruction decisions of our local school boards.

Further, as outlined in the enclosed letter from Florida Senate President Don Gaetz and Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Will Weatherford dated July 17, 2013, Florida has major concerns with the ability of PARCC to deliver an assessment that meets the expectations of Floridians.

As a result, I intend to ask that the State Board of Education direct the Commissioner of Education to end Florida's fiscal agent relationship with PARCC and to issue a competitive solicitation to select Florida's next state assessment. Certainly, all assessment providers, including PARCC, may be able to compete in this process, as long as assessment solutions are consistent with the necessary requirements laid out in Florida Executive Order 2013-276, released today. However, as the federal government continues to maintain its unwarranted involvement in PARCC, it is important that we examine other alternatives to select an assessment that best meets the needs of Florida students, parents and teachers, not the needs of the federal government or other states.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Rick Scott
Governor

cc: Commissioner Mitchell Chester, Chairman, PARCC Governing Board
        Florida Congressional Delegation
        The Honorable Don Gaetz, President, Florida Senate
        The Honorable Will Weatherford, Speaker, Florida House of Representatives
        State Board of Education Members
        Commissioner Pam Stewart, Florida Department of Education

Enclosures (2)