

Dear Representatives,

Thank you for your brave support of parents in fighting against PARCC and Common Core and student privacy. If you would, please review the summary of the circumstances surrounding the creation of Rep Leger's HB953 with questions that parents want answered on the House floor highlighted in red. Most alarming is the fact that Rep Leger's amendments completely reverse and are the opposite of the original intent of this bill as posted for the public. The original intent seemed to be an attempt to protect Louisiana from standards that would have allowed for federal intrusion and collection of student data. On its face, appearing to STOP Common Core but then the bill did a 180! There is nothing wrong with amending a bill BUT to completely remove and/or reverse the intent as presented in the original does and should raise suspicion for all legislators.

The [Nola.com](#) article written by Julia O'Donoghue "Louisiana bill addressing 'high academic standards' brings out fears about Common Core" published on April 29th, 2014, pointed out that Rep. Walt Leger's HB 953 is an attempt to codify both Common Core and PARCC. I first became aware of Rep. Leger's intent to keep Common Core and PARCC by whatever means he felt necessary in an article from the New Orleans Times-Picayune published March 1st. It was an article about the upcoming legislative session. In reference to upcoming bills aimed at changing or removing Common Core and PARCC, it was written that "the New Orleans Democrat and Common Core proponent said he's planning on taking out an insurance policy in case any of these efforts make headway by filing a 'placeholder' bill that can be amended to outdo any changes approved by lawmakers during this session. Leger said he is working with state Superintendent of Education John White to fashion the placeholder bill, which will be largely bereft of content and can be filled in later."

When Rep. Geymann's anti-Common Core and Rep. Henry's anti-PARCC bills were defeated on April 2nd in House Education Committee, there was a lot of talk that a deal had been made with the black caucus. The deal was supposedly that if the black caucus would take the position to support Common Core, there would be an additional delay in the consequences of the PARCC assessment. This delay would be added as an amendment in a future bill. In an article by Tyler Bridges, "Common Core remains in play but effects might be delayed for a third year," it is stated that State Rep. Walt Leger also has a bill that could be amended. Obviously, HB 953 is that bill.

When HB 953 was initially drafted, the descriptor was [STUDENT/STANDARDS: Provides relative to statewide content standards for required subjects], and the body of it was only 1 1/2 pages long. It appeared to push for Louisiana standards, to minimize the role of the federal government in curriculum requirements, and to minimize the collection of student data. The following is from lines 14-18: "Content standards shall be established in accordance with Louisiana educational priorities as determined by the state board. Content standards shall not require the use of federally or state-endorsed curricula, textbooks, or other instructional materials and shall not require the collection or reporting of any student data." This was not a bill that caused much opposition until the night before it was presented and numerous amendments were made. The body of the bill doubled in size and the new bill descriptor was [STUDENT/STANDARDS: Provides for the collection, sharing, and use of student assessment results and information by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.]

To remove what in the original bill were lines 14-18, suggests that Rep Leger decided intends to leave the door open for "federally or state-endorsed curricula, textbooks, or other instructional

materials” and that he favors and intends to leave the door also open for the use of such curricula etc to collect and report student data. **If such is not the case, then please ask Rep Leger why the deletion of this?** All representatives should be suspicious of this bill, if they do not care to have PARCC and Common Core be the only logical fit BY LAW to that, which is proposed in Leger’s bill.

When the House Education Committee discussed this bill, a bait and switch had occurred and stands as a tactic endorsed and supported by this Committee. Rep. Leger made sure that few constituents and concerned parents would be present by waiting until the last minute to introduce a bill that now looked completely different than its original form and intent. More importantly, he now presented a bill that would bind us to Common Core and PARCC assessments by law; clearly attempting to prohibit Governor Jindal from removing us as he has stated that he would.

When questioned about these amendments by Rep. Henry, Leger said, "They were the heart of the bill." Henry went on to say that he would have expected them to be in the original bill considering Leger is referring to them as the heart of the bill. When asked if his bill codifies Common Core, he even states that he doesn't "believe" it does and denies that's the purpose of the bill. It is very telling that he doesn't say "no" in regards to codifying Common Core but rather states he doesn't "believe" it will.

On page 2, there is a section describing the state assessment tests. Lines 25-26 were added and include "and shall allow for comparison of student achievement with students in other states." This statement makes PARCC or any other assessment developed under the same circumstance a requirement by law. Since PARCC and SBAC are the only two current assessment tests that fit this description, Louisiana will be required by law to use one of these tests. On page 4, lines 11-14, it states "The state board shall use such assessments based on nationally competitive standards to establish a statewide performance goal to be reached by 2025 and shall use such a goal as the basis for school and performance expectations." The only current nationally competitive standards in existence are Common Core standards, therefore, this section binds Louisiana to using Common Core. **What does Rep Leger intend to accomplish by adding this questionable wording surrounding nationally comparable standards, if he does not intend to commit Louisiana by law to standards and assessments that have caused so much controversy? Please have him explain why he feels that the law needs to read this way.**

There are several other troubling parts of this bill. On page 3, there is a requirement that one nonelected faculty member at a Louisiana University will evaluate student assessment results and make the determination of what future achievement expectations should be. **Why only one person? To whom will this person be accountable?** Also, in the section that delays the consequences of the assessment tests, it is put into law that the distribution of letter grades must be better than the 2012-2013 distribution. Rep. Leger is putting into law that the results will be fixed to whatever the Louisiana Dept. of Education wants them to be.

Rep. Leger used very underhanded and manipulative tactics to create a bill that will achieve what he personally wants it to achieve. He forgot that he represents the people, works for the people, and is supposed to represent the people. He chose to purposefully trick the people and deny them their voice by the manner in which this bill was created to fly so far under the radar that no one would show up and some who oppose Common Core and PARCC might have actually been okay with parts of the original bill. Shame on the House Education Committee members who supported this

bill and gave their okay to these deceptive tactics! They need to correct that mistake when this bill makes it to the House floor by voting "NO" and sending a message that they respect their constituents and an honest use of legislative process.

What will be most telling is what happens with this bill next. When it goes to the House floor this Wednesday, the legislators present will have to state their position about Common Core and PARCC on record. Their constituents will be watching. **This is undeniably a Common Core bill and the votes will be used to inform constituents of the support and opposition of each and every House Member.** If this bill makes its way to Governor Jindal's desk, he will have to veto it. He has been stating for weeks now that he intends to remove Louisiana from PARCC testing and Common Core. If he is to remain true to his word, then this bill must somehow eventually die.

MORE QUESTIONS PARENTS WOULD LIKE SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED:

1.If the addition on page 2, lines 25-26, does not make PARCC or another equivalent, multi-state, developed assessment a requirement by law, then please explain how BESE/LDE will meet the legal requirements of this addition in the event that LA is removed/prohibited from PARCC or any other assessment derived/developed under similar circumstances.

2. If the addition on page 3, lines 11-12, does not require the assessments to align to Common Core (that is currently the nationally competitive standard as recognized by US-Dept of Ed), then please explain how BESE/LDE will meet the legal requirements of this addition in the event that LA is removed/prohibited from the Common Core Standards or any other standards derived/developed under similar circumstances.

We thank you with any effort in support of our expressed concerns regarding HB953 and hope and pray that you are successful in garnering the support necessary to stop this bill from going any further.

Sincerely,
Anna Arthurs
Sara Wood