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STATEMENT FOR GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO'S COMMON CORE TASK FORCE

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Good afternoon, my name is John Ravitz and I'm the Vice President/COO for The Business Council of Westchester (BCW), the county's largest business membership organization. We have 1,000 members ranging in size from multinational corporations, universities, hospitals, professional service firms, mid-size and small businesses and not-for-profit organizations. I should also note that I served as a member of the New York State Assembly from 1990-2002 and was a member of both the Assembly's Education and Higher Education committees.

Preparing New York State's students to have the skills to attend college and/or enter the work force is a top priority of the BCW and we have focused on the importance of creating higher educational standards in our legislative agenda for the past four years. Higher standards for all students create a baseline of what students need to know to achieve success in college and 21st century careers. Quality test help measure student progress toward that baseline and show strengths and weaknesses of students.

Recent Education proposals, such as President Obama's call to limit testing time and Governor's Cuomo's action to create this task force, are examples of steps to help students achieve success, not turn away from it. Together, standards and assessments help teachers and entire communities prepare students for success which has to be our common goal.

Education leaders, both nationally and here in New York understand that improving a system is different than undermining it. It's why New York has already limited testing to one percent of all classroom time, has begun to introduce computer-based assessments and increased both transparency of and teacher involvement in test development. Each of these improvements came about from feedback from parents and teachers.

As we look to continue to improve how we deliver higher standards in New York for our students, the BCW believes that by working together we can continue to make improvements to the Common Core Curriculum for students, parents and our communities. We also feel that there is something wrong with trying to undermine those standards and pull the rug out from under the hard work of implementation that schools, students and teachers have been doing. We are concerned when we hear the talk that we should eliminate higher standards and tests outright. Such an elimination would replace our current standards with either the failed policies of the past or standards and tests of another name, wasting millions of dollars of investments and another generation of students in the process.

There was a reason Common Core standards were developed in the first place. Business leaders and university administrators were getting too many high school graduates who lacked basic reading and math skills, much less the tools to compete in the 21st century.

Lowering standards and depriving us of the data we need to assess how well our children are learning key principles, such as critical thinking and reasoning isn't a plan to address that problem. It's a plan to return to the policies that led to the problem in the first place.

We should not lose sight over the fact that in New York State we have the opportunity for educators, parents, students and business leaders to work together in our local communities to continue to create an educational system that never loses the focus of giving all of our students the opportunity to achieve success in their classroom which will only help them as they become the future workforce for our state and country.