

**Massachusetts' participation in the U.S. DOE's/ National Governors Association/
Council of Chief State School Officers Common Core/national standards initiative**

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May 18, 2010

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Records Custodian:

On June 2, 2009, Governor Deval Patrick and Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester announced the Commonwealth's participation in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=4827>. The CCSSI began its work in earnest in November of 2008.

The CCSSI project is being led by two organizations –the National Governors Association (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)—whose members are comprised of public officials and receive public money in the form of dues. CCSSI is part of the United States Department of Education's federal Race to the Top (RTTT) contest. Non-governmental organizations Achieve, Inc. and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are also major sponsors of CCSSI; Massachusetts officials have had close interactions with these entities regarding this work. The CCSSI project has the potential to make major, unilateral Executive Branch revisions to education reform as it has been known since the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA), and substantially alter the state's standards and assessments that were mandated by the 1993 MERA.

Therefore, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Massachusetts Public Records Law, we hereby request the following, as it relates to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education: Any and all e-mail, text messages, public cell phone records, phone message logs, other saved electronic communications, as well as all written correspondence that relate to Massachusetts' policy deliberations and decision-making to, from, and between: **Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell D. Chester; Chairwoman of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) Maura Banta; Education Secretary S. Paul Reville; the full staff of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE); and the full staff of the Executive Office of Education (EOE).** In particular, we seek e-mail between Massachusetts state officials and the United States Department of Education, as well as the other entities responsible for the CCSSI, including the two organizations whose membership is comprised of public officials and receive public money in the form of dues; and the non-governmental organizations most closely connected with the CCSSI: the Council of Chief State School Officers (their various lobbyists, consultants, standards drafters, and validation committee members); the National Governors Association; James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy; Pearson Education; Educational Testing Service; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Achieve, Inc. This request is to ensure that all state-level education policymaking and deliberations are publicly transparent and accountable.

Timeframe for this request is: November 1, 2008 to June 2, 2010. As a Massachusetts non-profit 501 (c)3 with a particular focus on public policy issues pertaining to K-12 education, Pioneer Institute is seeking a full public interest fee waiver under 950 CMR 32.06(5), because we believe that the material requested "is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of government." We also wish to remind the agencies that the FOIA requires the release of all reasonably segregable portions of records (and this request be conducted within a reasonable timeframe). **Contact Information:** Pioneer Institute, 85 Devonshire Street, 8th floor Boston, MA 02109 (617) 723-2277

Sincerely,



Jim Stergios
Executive Director
Pioneer Institute