



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Washington, DC, April 29, 2009 – Arkansas Commissioner of Education and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Board President T. Kenneth James testified today before the House Education and Labor Committee on the state-led common core standards initiative being guided by CCSSO and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center). The purpose of the hearing was to examine how states can better prepare their students to compete in a global economy by using internationally benchmarked common standards.

In his testimony, James highlighted the levels of national, state, and local support of the common standards work including President Obama's visit to CCSSO's Legislative Conference on March 10; CCSSO and the NGA Center's April 17 meeting where 41 states convened in Chicago to discuss the process and adoption of state-led common standards; and the outpouring of support Arkansas state superintendents showed when James informed them of the common core standards work he was involved in with other states. James also discussed the economic imperative of common state standards; the commonality of state standards that already exists among states; and the time, energy, and financial inefficiencies of states independently going through the standards-setting process.

"I have witnessed not only widespread support for a state-led common standards setting process, but a sincere belief that states *must* lead this effort for the good of our young people and for the good of our country," James stated in his testimony.

CCSSO feels the state-led, common standards initiative is an historic opportunity to collectively improve the education of America's children. CCSSO Executive Director Gene Wilhoit stated, "The more states engaged in this process—and the more diverse the states—the more powerful this initiative becomes." This week, CCSSO and the NGA Center sent a memorandum of agreement to chief state school officers and governors for their signatures indicating their commitment to participate in the process of developing a common core of standards in mathematics and language arts.

Additional witnesses attending the hearing were The Honorable James B. Hunt, Jr., James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy; Greg Jones, Chair of the California Business for Excellence in Education; Dave Levin, Co-Founder of the Knowledge Is Power Program; and Randi Weingarten, President American Federation of Teachers.

***The Arkansas Department of Education strives to ensure that all children in the state have access to a quality education by providing educators, administrators and staff with leadership, resources and training.***