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We Raise New Jersey Statement on Delayed Vote on State Testing Changes

Trenton, NJ (September 12, 2018) – Members of the We Raise New Jersey coalition appreciate today's decision by the State Board of Education to delay a vote on the Murphy Administration's initial proposal to change the state assessment system and related graduation requirements.

We Raise New Jersey recognizes and appreciates the time and careful consideration given by the State Board of Education to the proposal. As a coalition representing education, business, and civic organizations across the state, we believe that decisions about the state's vision for what every New Jersey high school graduate should know and be able to do must be informed by robust evidence and meaningful two-way dialogue with a variety of stakeholders. The State Board's decision to postpone a vote reflects the need to take more time to engage in conversations to clarify a state vision and comprehensive strategy for assessments and graduation requirements that is understandable to all.

"Today the State Board of Education took an important step in ensuring we maintain high expectations for all of our students to graduate ready for success in college, career, and life," stated Donna Custard, President of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation. "While we recognize that there is room for improvement with aspects of our assessment system and graduation requirements, we also know that high-quality, objective measures of student attainment of grade-level skills help us to see the big picture of how students are doing in our state – something of critical importance to our business community. In order to best equip students to enter the workforce, we must have a detailed plan in place to ensure that the elimination of any exams will not result in a lack of emphasis on the importance of the skills those exams measure."

Patricia Morgan, Executive Director of JerseyCAN, added, "We Raise New Jersey joins lawmakers and other stakeholders in calling for more data and evidence to support changes to our system. We also stand ready to engage in conversations with the Department of Education and other stakeholders to come to consensus on the educational opportunities and outcomes we believe all of our students deserve."

A [recent report from Achieve](#) shows just how important robust state graduation requirements are: the academic performance of America's high schoolers on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) falls far below the national graduation rate, pointing to a troubling disconnect between what states require of graduates and how prepared those graduates actually are upon leaving high school. The report emphasizes that nearly half of recent graduates felt unprepared for success after high school, while those who follow a rigorous course of study are better prepared for success in college.

"New Jersey has been a national leader in public education for many years," remarked Michael Taylor, Board Member of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey. "We are encouraged that today's action by the State Board of Education reflects our continued commitment to high standards and expectations for our students and our state."

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About We Raise New Jersey: WRNJ advocates for the high-quality education every student deserves to be prepared for success in college, career, and community by harnessing the collective strength of New Jersey's influential education, business, and civic organizations. Coalition members include: New Jersey PTA, JerseyCAN, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, New Jersey Council of County Colleges, New Jersey Business & Industry Association, and the New Jersey Charter Schools Association. For more information, visit <http://www.werajenj.org/>, and follow <https://www.facebook.com/WeRaiseNJ/> and [@WeRaiseNJ](#).