



**Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)**  
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### **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 27, 2017

**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

**FROM:** Dafne A. Carnright, Chairperson  
GACEC

**RE:** **House Bill No. 70 (Cursive Writing)**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 70 which makes teaching cursive writing a requirement for all public schools in Delaware. Council **endorses** the proposed legislation subject to consideration of one clarifying amendment. On the one hand, the bill requires all public elementary schools (which would include charter schools) to teach cursive writing (lines 4-5). On the other hand, the bill only requires local boards of education (not charter school boards) to ensure compliance. For consistency, the bill could be amended by inserting "and charter school board of directors" after "board of education) in line 6. See, e.g., 14 Del.C. §504.

Common Core standards do not require students to learn cursive writing. This has prompted a growing number of states to react by adopting legislation requiring or encouraging cursive instruction. At least fourteen states have adopted cursive proficiency in public schools laws. See March 5, 2017 Time Magazine article, "Cursive Is Making a Comeback. Test Your Handwriting Skills with this Quiz". Legislation is pending in other states.

Opponents argue cursive proficiency is unnecessary given the prevalent use of electronic keyboards on computers, phones and pad devices.

Proponents argue that learning cursive enhances brain function, increases fine motor dexterity, allows students to read handwritten and historic documents, and is artistic.

The debate is reminiscent of the debate over Braille instruction for individuals who are blind or have visual impairments. With screen reader software, text can be read to such individuals. With software such as Dragon Dictate, verbal dictation is printed on a screen. Thus, detractors of Braille instruction argue it is unnecessary. To the contrary, studies confirm that instruction in Braille increases brain function and is correlated with higher educational and vocational achievement. Although the Delaware Department of Education has proposed regulations omitting Braille instruction, it has been prompted to reinstate standards when reminded that Delaware statutory law requires instruction in Braille. See Title 14 Del.C. §206.

Another equivalent is the instruction of multiplication tables. Given the ready availability of calculators, one could argue there is no need to teach multiplication tables. New Hampshire addressed this concern by adopting legislation in 2015 designed to prompt schools to both teach cursive and memorization of multiplication tables.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our observations and endorsement. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss at the GACEC office should you have any questions.