TO:       Members of the New Jersey State Board of Education

FROM: NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/ NJ Bilingual Educators
       (NJTESOL/NJBE)

RE:       Governor Murphy’s PARCC Regulations

DATE:     September 9, 2018

On behalf of NJTESOL/NJBE, a professional organization for those concerned with the teaching of English as a Second Language, and Bilingual Education, we are writing to support the new regulations proposed by the Murphy Administration.

Our membership is comprised of educators and administrators dedicated to the instruction of English learners (ELs) at all levels of public and private education. Our interests include classroom practices, research, curriculum development, funding, employment and socio-political concerns.

English learners are students who are in the process of acquiring a new language. This is a process that takes time. Data illustrate that these students cannot pass these standardized tests until they reach a high intermediate or advanced level of English which usually takes four to five years. These proposed regulations would assist this population in several ways:

1. Reduce the number of PARCC tests high school students must take from six to two.
   - These students require instructional time. Taking assessments that they do not understand is a meaningless exercise. They would be better served receiving instruction and taking the assessment when they have acquired a requisite level of proficiency.

2. Shorten by 25% the length of time that all New Jersey public school students spend taking standardized tests.
   - This regulation would benefit all students but again would truly allow ELs more instructional time as opposed to sitting and taking assessments that they may not understand.
3. Change the graduation requirements for the classes of 2021 and beyond, to enable students to use multiple other options to graduate (SAT, ACT, PSAT, ASVAB, Accuplacer, and the portfolio option) rather than having to score a 4 or 5 on the PARCC Algebra 1 and 10th grade English Language Arts tests in order to graduate from high school.
   o This is by far one of the most necessary changes for ELs. ELs have the highest dropout rate and lowest graduation rate of all subgroups in NJ. They benefitted greatly from the multiple opportunities to pass the HSPA and to utilize the portfolio to demonstrate competency. The inclusion of the Accuplacer Writeplacer as an alternative assessment during the transition has also provided equity and access to a high school diploma for this subgroup. Limiting the high school graduation requirement to passing two PARCC exams in 10th grade would be most detrimental to this vulnerable group of students.

For these reasons, we urge you to support of these necessary changes proposed by the Murphy Administration.