

H340 – AN ACT RELATIVE TO A MORATORIUM ON HIGH-STAKES TESTING AND PARCC

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PURPOSE OF THIS BILL

Educators, parents, and students across the Commonwealth are growing increasingly concerned about high-stakes testing and are calling for the reexamination of how the current standardized assessment, MCAS, is being used. In addition, there is also concern about the test and test preparation of Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) - most importantly, the time it takes away from teaching.

Many important decisions about districts, schools, educators, and students are based on these test scores. Consequently, districts have increased the amount of time used in test preparation throughout the course of the year but are most prevalent in the weeks leading up to testing dates. This has been done at the expenses of other learning in important areas such as art, music, gym and health education.

WHAT THIS BILL DOES

H340 is twofold. It places a three-year moratorium on the implementation of PARCC and it also removes the “high-stakes” nature of MCAS, for three years, by eliminating:

- The 10th grade graduation requirement;
- The use of MCAS scores in evaluating educators; and
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s use of MCAS scores for assessing schools and/or school districts.

During the three-year moratorium, a task force of community stakeholders, parents, educators, union leaders, appropriate administration designees and legislators will meet and examine the high-stakes use of MCAS in light of the paramount goal of the Education Reform Act of 1993 which, in part, reads:

“to provide a public education system of sufficient quality to extend to all children including a limited English proficient student[s] ... and also, including a school age child with a disability ... the opportunity to reach their full potential and to lead lives as participants in the political, social, and economic life of the commonwealth ...”

The task force will meet to examine the standardized assessments that are currently used in the classroom. They will then evaluate the use of standardized assessments, the implementation of the educator evaluation framework, and the use of student data on standardized tests for the purpose of evaluating students, educators, schools, and districts in order to determine if the system of assessments are providing a quality public education system.

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JUST THE FACTS

In addition the task force will consider the following questions:

- What are the time and cost implications of mandated testing on federal, state and district resources?
- What impact does mandated testing have on effective teaching and learning in the classroom?
- What mechanisms are available other than standardized assessments to measure student, teacher, school and district progress towards achieving a quality public education?

The task force will submit their findings to the Clerks of the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Massachusetts Legislature no later than eighteen months after the task force organizes.