

Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House Room, 111
Boston, MA 02133

Rep. Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Madame Chairs:

My name is Elizabeth McNeil.

I am an Educational Assistant at Southbridge Middle High School in Southbridge. I work in a substantially separate classroom for students who have severe needs.

I fully support House Bill 340 and ask you to as well, and this is why.

This year, in the beginning of December, we reviewed the standards the state wanted and started to teach MCAS material. This continued until the beginning of April. Yes, we were still teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, but the test made us focus on different aspects of those subjects.

For example, we have a math program that each student participates in. The program walks the students through learning their numbers and applying the numbers, but for the MCAS, we have to set aside this material and teach one or two specific aspects of math that come out of sequence with the material the students were learning, so instead of building a floor of math for the student to add to and raise them up, the floor just got wider. It does not allow us to build on the basic floor already laid down.

I would like to suggest a better way to help our students. It is not through an increase in testing, but with more support for the homes. We can do this by teaching homemaking skills in the classroom, offer programs to help the parents parent and help their children, teach the students how to become productive citizens, not adults who know how to take a test.

Our students don't need more tests, they need more basic help.

Please consider, who is REALLY benefitting from these tests?

Certainly not the students.

Let's take the monies paid to the companies making the test and put it back into the classrooms.

Thank you.

Elizabeth McNeil

Southbridge

cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff

Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair

Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair