

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

Testimony regarding Moratorium on High-Stakes Testing and PARCC (HB 340)

Dear Madame Chairs:

The first precept of one of our most noble and valued professions is “Do No Harm.” Would that that were an immutable goal for all of us. Nevertheless, in education, a no less noble and necessary endeavor, there appears to be serious erosion of such a simple and universally understandable objective via the adoption of high-stakes testing. Whether a derivative of the law of unintended consequences or a result of corporate competitive quests to dominate the educational testing and support materials industry, high-stakes testing in its current application, is indeed doing harm.

Tests are necessary, and common sense calls for assessment of efforts and accountability. However, there are many kinds, purposes and uses of testing. Also, it’s only logical and prudent to assess the test itself to assure that it achieves its purported purpose. Is the test valid and reliable? Is it an achievement or aptitude test? Is it being used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, to improve instruction or treatment, to inform the person being tested or to weed out the less capable? In today’s competitive marketplace, the reality is that it should also be examined if the test and its prepackaged myriad sub-components are of more importance to the development of the corporate bottom line than to the development of the student and improvement of the educational system.

So, High-Stakes Testing needs to be examined just as any testing needs to be evaluated to determine what good vs harm is being produced.

Since even good intentions can lead to bad results, HB 340 is calling for a moratorium on high-stakes testing and PARCC for three years so that we can all more objectively look at the many aspects of their use. How much time and money are being devoted to such a narrow area of education and how is it affecting our most precious resources, our human capital? Testing for readiness, understanding, performance and proficiency will still take place and accountability will not disappear, but punishment, restriction from broad curricular experiences and exclusion from the joys of discovery and experimentation will not be the outcomes of less than desirable results. The whole person will be valued as greater than a test result – assisted, nurtured, challenged and supported in his or her continuing education. Please allow for the time to pause,

reflect and evaluate the current culture of emphasis on high-stakes testing and assess harm versus good.

Please support this legislation establishing a three-year moratorium.

Sincerely,
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cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff
Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair
Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair