

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 Scott Beaulieu. I am an educator with 23 years' experience and a father of 2 children. I am here today to express my support for the H340 Bill. A moratorium on high-stakes testing is expressly needed to re-evaluate how our educational system is working.

My first concern with tests such as MCAS and PARCC is the effect they are having on our children. These tests are misrepresenting the educational experience and knowledge that our students have. They misrepresent the truth. My 14-year-old son has an anxiety disorder. He has worked every day of his educational career to do the best work he can do and has successfully completed his career through middle school with exceptional grades: A's and B's. During any other time in the history of education, this would be considered an achievement and he would reap the benefits society would have to offer for his hard work, including a High School diploma. Yet due to the pressures brought upon him by administrators and teachers, whose evaluations and careers depend on their students being proficient on MCAS and PARCC testing, my son is deemed "Needs Improvement" based on a test that is a random snap shot in time. His test scores are affected by the intense pressure put on him by himself, teachers, administrators and an educational system as a whole. When did the experience of learning lose its focus on the reality that we are dealing with children and not widgets!

Our children are being judged by a random number on a random day, without taking into account what they deal with on a daily basis. Learning and worth should not be determined in this way, and neither should the teacher's ability to teach or a school's effectiveness. The anxiety my son feels due to the importance laid upon these tests is overwhelming and when a child, MY CHILD, is working to the best of his ability and producing passing grades his future should NOT be determined by a random number on a random day! He is more than that. Let the professionals who have been trained to work with children determine the effectiveness of their work. Education is the only professional career on Earth where lay people believe they can do a better job than the people who have been explicitly trained for the job. There are not many people who diagnose themselves correctly to their doctor, pull teeth for their dentist, or represent themselves in the court room for their lawyer, yet teachers are told everyday by non-educators how to do their jobs better.

Secondly, I am a professional educator whose workings conditions and career are affected by MCAS and PARCC testing. It is time to allow the trained professionals, teachers, to teach their students

the content they need to learn. These high-stakes tests take valuable time away from my teaching year. The time taken away from my classes does not allow my students the needed time to explore important content in a way that they become proficient in the material. This shortage of teaching time then shows up in students' scores on the high-stakes tests, which in turn show up on a teacher's and administrator's evaluation.

Teachers are experiencing a time of intense stress and anxiety, and are being charged with the ills of society by having their evaluations tied to MCAS and PARCC scores. Our students live with many extreme circumstances such as divorce, homelessness, and their basic needs not being met. With these and other extreme situations influencing their lives, it is not hard to believe that the MCAS and PARCC tests do not rank high on their things to be successful at. Their next meal or where they are sleeping tonight is much more prevalent in their minds. This does not lend well to a student testing well any time, yet as educator's we are evaluated on how they do on these tests. We have no influence on how our students come to school and what they have experienced, yet we are held responsible for students' scores. It is very stressful for educator's who are working as hard as they can to teach our students yet have an educational system that punishes them for things they cannot control. The system sets up teachers, administrators, and most of all our children to fail.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that this committee support House Bill H340 and allow our students and educational experts to breath and re-evaluate the future of our collective experience. On the day I began to write this testimony I had been talking with our schools nurse and discovered a marked increase in student visits to the nurse due to stomachache and anxiety on days prior to testing and days of actual testing. The high-stakes tests, MCAS and PARCC, are treating our students and professional educators as cogs in a great machine and are taking out the humanity in a very human endeavor, learning. The reason I became a teacher was not just to help educate young people in content, but to mentor our young people into becoming productive, caring, responsible members of society, that have a life-long love of learning. The continuous and arduous schedule of testing has taken the joy out of an exciting, and extremely important career needed by our society, but it has also soured the joy of learning for an entire generation of American children. This saddens me.

This moratorium is important to our Commonwealth, but more importantly it is important to the fabric of our society and the children we endeavor to raise. They deserve better and you have the power to give them a much improved educational experience by supporting this H340. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Scott Beaulieu, President
South Hadley Education Association

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