

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 David Lane. I began my teaching career almost 25 years ago, the last nine of which I've spent in central Massachusetts where I work in the English and ELL Departments at Leominster High School. I am also the parent of three children in public schools in Massachusetts. I am here today speaking to you in both roles to urge you to pass House Bill 340.

High stakes testing harms young people far more than it helps them.

I could give you many examples: how disruptive to the culture of my high school 50 days of testing has been this year.

I could tell you about Marcia, an immigrant who came here full of pride in herself as a student but who then became convinced she's bad at school because she couldn't pass a Science MCAS that asked her questions I doubt many people in this chamber could answer correctly.

I could also tell you about Cory, a brilliant young man who read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for fun and who dropped out of school AFTER passing his MCAS exams because school was simply not relevant for him. This makes him an example of a very alarming trend of students who drop out AFTER they pass their MCAS exams. And Cory's story is also related to another trend: homeschooling among families with one or two parents with advanced degrees. These families make up the group that is homeschooling at increasing rates every year.

Why? Because the focus on the kind of teaching required to get kids to be successful on high stakes tests is NOT the kind of teaching those parents want for their children. It's not the kind of teaching I want for my children and unless things change quickly, I am going to pull my children out of public schools. If that doesn't alarm you into questioning the value of high stakes tests, then nothing will.

But I'm here because I need you to hear something very important – that should inspire you to vote yes on HB 340. High stakes, standardized tests are part of a philosophy of education that most experts know has always been false. That philosophy is rooted in the idea that young people won't learn anything unless we coerce or compel them to with rewards and punishments. But young people do NOT need to be threatened in order to learn. Young people are human – and humans have a natural intrinsic motivation to learn. Over 40 years of research into neurobiology and the science of human motivation are incontrovertible. Carrot-and-stick motivators like high stakes tests discourage people from doing rigorous, challenging and valuable learning. They do NOT help guarantee access to a quality education,

and they are the least efficient ways to demand accountability from teachers and schools. They simply give the appearance of accountability and our students KNOW it.

It is time for the educational establishment to catch up to science. And it's time for Massachusetts to lead the nation once again. Our Commonwealth was bold: the first in the nation to create universal access education. It is time for us to be bold once again and LEAD. Pass HB 340.

Thank you,  
David Lane

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