

Good morning,

I am a high school English teacher in the affluent suburb of Bedford. Our students' test scores are among the highest in Massachusetts, which, in turn, are among the highest in the world. I'd like to believe that this is because of how much effort I put into engaging students in challenging tasks. And it is. In part. I would be fooling myself if I didn't also attribute a lot of my students' achievement to the fact that when they go home from school, most of them have a quiet place to do work, Internet access, a hot dinner, and their own beds.

This is not the case for all of the students of my peers across the state, who work as hard as I do. These teachers, their schools, their communities, and their students are punished by the high-stakes use of standardized testing, which funnels badly needed resources into tests and test-prep materials which do not produce the critical and creative globally aware citizens that this world needs, and that they deserve to become.

For these and other reasons, I am in support of House Bill 340 concerning a moratorium on high-stakes testing and PARCC, and I request that the Committee report it favorably.

My district piloted the PARCC assessments in our 3-5 school and our middle school, and I can say that for all our diligence and tech-savviness, it was a nightmare.

Overall, our middle school spent 26 days in PARCC testing, in which little to no learning was accomplished. There were four weeks in between the first and second waves of testing, during which teachers did not receive the scores from the first. In so short a period, how could students possibly demonstrate improvement, and without being able to analyze the results, how could the tests possibly be used to inform instruction? Over this time, students' classes and services were disrupted, administrators were wholly consumed by PARCC scheduling and troubleshooting, and the district's entire IT department was mired at the middle school.

Most tragically, our district has seen the enormous amount of anxiety this testing has placed on our students. The sheer size of the test, the length of the test sessions,

and the fact that it is timed created inordinate amounts of stress in all our students, but especially our most vulnerable ones. One student, even with accommodations, required anxiety medication to get to sleep the night before each test session. When one of the many technical problems during the testing bumped her entire class off line, she burst into tears and had to leave school, fearful that she had failed herself and her teachers. In this and other districts, I have heard stories about kids weeping, having panic attacks, throwing up, not sleeping, and even being so afraid to lose time on the test that they wet themselves. This particular student's mother is now opting her children out.

My colleagues and I have serious concerns about the legitimacy of standardized testing, particularly the PARCC assessment, as a measure of student achievement and of teacher effectiveness. I ask you to think about the cost of this testing. To the taxpayers who see their earnings siphoned off to Pearson, to the educators who see the joy extinguished from teaching, and most of all, to the students who see the world in black (bubbles) and white (scoring sheets)?

Again, I urge you to support House Bill 340 and end this testing madness.

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