

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 before the Education Committee**  
**at the State House in Support of HB 340**

Dear Madame Chairs:

My name is Phyllis Neufeld, and I am the President of the Lexington Education Association, representing over 1,000 members. I am here to speak in favor of HB 340, by telling you a few of our stories.

“On the day before MCAS this year, I walked by the nurse' office and saw one of my students (this educator is a literacy specialist). When I went in to see what was going on he was telling the nurse that his stomach was hurting and that he was really anxious about the MCAS test tomorrow. He explained his worries to her, clearly upset, and she tried to give him some coping strategies – take deep breaths etc. It was so sad for me to see a 4th grade boy so upset over high stakes testing. Why are we needlessly adding stress to the lives of our young children?”

In another story an educator tells me that a boy in one of our fourth grade classes was weeping before the test and informed his teacher that his dog had died the night before. They had come home from a restaurant and found the dog dead. The teacher said that he cried and cried for the first part of the test and, eventually, did a bit of it. We were not able to do anything except to let him sit there and cry! Is this a worthwhile way to measure his success in school?

And my last story was written by a veteran teacher about her own son. She writes, “My son is a fourth grader. He is a good kid, a true friend, a hard worker, a trustworthy teammate and a gifted athlete. I just received an email from a hockey mom that read, ‘My son thinks your son is the happiest kid he's ever met.’

“MCAS has made my son feel discouraged, stupid and nervous. Stomachaches, headaches and trouble sleeping all coincide with testing dates. He reports that he ‘knows’ kids think he’s dumb and being the last to finish testing is shameful. MCAS is making him feel ‘less than.’

“This is not how we are raising him. I couldn't be clearer when I tell him I don't even look at the scores. I rip them up. I've been an educator for over 15 years and I place zero value on MCAS. What matters is that he continues to work hard day in and day out, shows kindness to others, learns to advocate for himself and balances his strengths and challenges. MCAS will never quantify that.”

Please, give us the time to examine the high stakes testing and do what is right for children. Please support HB 340.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Neufeld, President

Lexington Education Association

cc: Joint Committee on Education Members & Staff

Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Vice Chair

Rep. Danielle Gregoire, Vice Chair