

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:

I am speaking today, as a teacher and a parent, in support of H340. I believe my comments apply to many of the other assessment bills as well.

For years now, we have been trying to test our way to excellence. It hasn't worked. In fact, the high stakes nature of testing has done the opposite of what was intended.

The problem with leveraging testing as a school improvement strategy is we do not prepare students for life – we prepare them for tests. Almost all decisions made in schools revolve around testing: when field trips happen, the curriculum that's taught, the assignment of support staff. The tail is wagging the dog. Passing a test has become the goal of education.

I understand why schools are doing this because it's about survival. If schools are judged by test scores then test scores become their focus.

The problem is, our focus should be children. Testing is not serving them well.

It is not serving Janelle, who lives in an abusive and neglectful home, who put her head down on her desk during the first session of MCAS and did not fill in one bubble.

It is not serving Devin, a brilliant child who saw his father arrested for stabbing his mother the night before I asked him to do his best on MCAS.

It is not serving Corey, a loving child who experienced brain damage at birth who takes the same test as his peers.

It is not serving Ashley, a motivated student so determined to be perfect that she experiences severe testing anxiety.

It is not serving Nathaniel, an autistic child who has lived in 3 different states and is back in Massachusetts because his drug addicted parents have moved in with his grandparents.

No test is going to tell you what the abilities of these children are. It won't tell you how to motivate or support them. It won't tell you what books they enjoy, what their dreams are, or what their challenges are. Testing is not serving our children academically or emotionally.

Let's start investing the same amount of time, energy and money that goes into testing into supporting our students to reach their full potential.

Please support H340. We need to determine whether we can do better than the status quo.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Cusick  
1528 Highland Ave.  
Fall River, MA

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