



Oregon Department of Education

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HB 2713: Evaluation of the use of standardized tests House Committee on Education February 13, 2015

Good afternoon Chair Doherty and members of the committee. For the record I am Derek Brown, Assessment Director at the Department of Education and am here to testify on HB 2713. HB 2713 directs the Oregon Department of Education to evaluate the use of standardized tests in public schools in Oregon and submit a report to the interim legislative committees on education no later than September 15, 2016. The department is neutral on the bill.

Background:

A “standardized” test is an assessment that is administered and scored in a consistent (or standard) manner. The consistency permits more reliable comparisons of outcomes for test takers.

Standardized testing in Oregon schools encompasses the statewide assessment (the current Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills and the new Smarter Balanced assessment for English and mathematics); the Advanced Placement tests that some students take; the SAT and ACT; etc. Not all students take all these tests, but all students take the state assessments in English, math, and science.

Oregon first used a state-developed assessment in 1999 and the federal government first required states to conduct student assessments in 2002 as a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Issue:

While student testing began as an accountability for schools and school districts to ensure they were effective and using tax dollars efficiently, some students, parents, and educators believe that testing holds little value for students and absorbs too many resources that could be better spent on other educational practices.

Legislation:

HB 2713 directs the department to collaborate with teachers and administrators to evaluate the use of standardized tests in the schools. The evaluation must include the fiscal, administrative, and educational impacts of standardized tests, including the impacts on instructional time,

curricula, professional flexibility, administrative time and focus, and budgets. It also requires a review of standardized test regimes currently implemented and proposed.

The idea behind HB 2713 is consistent with recommendations being developed by the Oregon Education Investment Board and Oregon Education Association.

Concerns:

As written, the term “standardized tests” may be more broad than the author intended. If the end-of-year (summative) statewide assessment is the intended target of scrutiny, the language should be narrowed. This would reduce the cost, as well.

Determining the “fiscal, administrative, and educational impacts” of tests on schools will require significant research and time for both the department and school districts.

The timeline of one-year will necessitate that work begin immediately and will likely require contracting the work out.

Fiscal:

As written, the bill anticipates a surveys of teachers and administrators on current standardized testing regimes in 197 districts and 19 education service districts. Work groups will likely also be formed.