

Chair Doherty and members of the committee,

My name is Mark McNeal, and I am writing in support of House Bill 2713. I am the parent of three students in the Portland Public Schools and I am a teacher in the Lake Oswego School District.

As a parent I am frustrated and appalled at the message my children are receiving from their public school education. Fortunately, the teachers my children have had see the inherent flaws in educational reform bent in the direction of standardized tests. But here is what my kids have learned: education is something you fight for in the spare time between legislated hoop jumping. OAKS testing, and now Smarter Balanced, left them feeling inadequate and frustrated, and the scores reconfirmed what the teachers already knew, and what wife and I already knew. Why do my children need to take days out of school time, time focused on learning that they enjoy--educational opportunities that fulfill their needs as learners and as people--to take a test that tells us....nothing new? No wonder they are frustrated. I am too.

As an educator, I hesitate to support House Bill 2713, even though I am philosophically in agreement with it. The current attitude in this country towards education and educators is vitriolic and accusatory. All too often, in the newspapers and political campaigns, teachers are cast as the problem with our education system. If it were only that easy. Standardized testing is a simple solution to a complex problem. But as soon as I say that I become one of those teachers that just doesn't want to face the necessary changes coming to public education.

And that is completely ridiculous, because I love my job and I would do anything to be a better teacher, and to work toward improvements in education. But, tests are not and never will be what makes education valuable and what sparks education reform.

I'm going to list some questions that may be melodramatic, but it's the idea that matters, and it's that idea that is at the heart of House Bill 2713. How much does Smarter Balanced cost to implement? How much does it cost to pay for the several days that I spent training for Smarter Balanced just this year? For the staff people whose entire job is to organize student samples and to train teachers? How much does it cost to pay for my substitute to watch my English classes so that I can proctor a test for students I don't even know, paying for me to do a job a ten year old could do? How much does it cost in passion for school does losing an hour every day for two weeks from my childrens' education? How much would it cost to extend the school year for several weeks so that teachers can teach all of the curriculum that is lost to testing time? And don't forget, administrators, counselors, custodians will all need to be there too. How much is each state in this country paying for corporations like Smarter Balanced to create exams and deliver them to states like Oregon? The list goes on and on. That's a lot of money that is funneling out of a system that is underfunded in the first place.

You don't fix polluted water by constantly testing the river where it meets the ocean. You don't raise your son or daughter by giving them tests. And you don't teach students and improve education through Smarter Balanced, OAKS, SAT, ACT, and any other test. You make daily

education valuable for students, where they are given ample opportunity to succeed and fail, where they are guided by teachers that are supported by a system that trusts them, in a system that sees one on one teaching, small class sizes, and meaningful curriculum and assessment as the real measures of learning.

And so, yes, I am in support of House Bill 2713.

Thank you for your time.

Mark McNeal