

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

I am writing you again in support of HB 2655. As a leader of the Opt Out movement in Oregon, I have been hearing stories from parents around the state who want to opt their children out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment. While some parents have been able to easily opt their children out, others have met with a great deal of resistance. Some schools have provided an alternate lesson or setting for students who are opting out; some districts have told parents that they have to provide the alternate activity. Some districts are accepting parents' alternate activity easily while others have turned down requests saying that the activities parents suggested are unacceptable. In many cases, an activity turned down by one district is one that was easily approved by another. At least one district has gone so far as to require that parents provide an alternate ASSESSMENT. Today a parent contacted me and told me that an administrator has gone so far as to create a false profile on Facebook to infiltrate a parent opt out group and then proceed to pressure and bully parents who are encouraging others to opt out. If this is true it, it is outrageous behavior on the part of a school official.

Additionally, there are districts which have told parents that their request to have their students opt out based on a religious belief are invalid. Statements have been made that parents must opt out based on religious beliefs and not on personal or political beliefs, the parents' statements about their religious beliefs have been questioned. This not only violates the parents [rights under the 14th Amendment, which have been upheld in at least two US Supreme Court cases](#) to direct their children's education, but under the 1st Amendment as well. Parents should not have to defend their religious beliefs to agents of the state, and parents who do not subscribe to any particular organized religion should, and do, have equal rights under the law to direct their child's education.

Passing HB 2655 would not only ensure that procedures for opting out are uniform across the state, but also that this information would be translated into the languages spoken by parents at the school whenever possible. At my dual immersion school, many Spanish speaking parents are just now learning about opt out, while our English speaking parents have heard a great deal about it in the English media. Passage would assure equity of access to information.

Finally, HB 2655 lets parents know who will have access to the results of their child's assessments. This is an important step towards protecting students' data privacy.

This is a common sense bill that clarifies procedures around what has recently become a contentious issue in many schools and districts across the state and will only become more so if we continue to require the administration of a test that lasts an average of 8 hours to students as young as third grade.

Please support HB 2655.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Jeskey  
Canby, OR