

Testimony Regarding HB 2680

Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a veteran teacher, president of my local teachers' association and the parent of Portland public school graduates (including public university). I have tracked education reform for longer than I'd care to remember and I'd like to take this opportunity to testify in favor of HB 2680.

I endorse any attempt to mitigate the more punitive aspects of the current testing mandates. I appreciate the fact that HB 2680 does not allow the current tests to be used for summative evaluations for schools or teachers for this academic year. Surely it would be folly to measure a school and its teachers on the basis of a test of such limited scope.

I also appreciate the fact that 2680 requires an in-depth look at the alignment between the tests and student learning.

However, I worry about clauses like, "Analyze student learning gaps; and identify adjustments in instruction necessary to address student learning gaps." Why do I object? Because it simultaneously validates the existence of the so-called Smarter Balanced tests and, will surely create new bureaucratic mandates – especially when the law goes through the Oregon Department of Education. And, as a teacher, I identify adjustments in instruction on a daily basis – without having a law telling me to do so. That is my job.

I took the SB ELA 11th grade practice test (along with a number of my colleagues.) We found a number of troubling aspects to the test. Not the least of which was the fact that 3 highly educated professionals disagreed on answer choices for a reading portion. The tests are purported to be "beyond" multiple choice. And yet, they're not. A reading passage asked the test taker to choose the sentence from the passage that best answered the question. However, not all sentences could be highlighted and chosen (online testing). The test makers had already reduced the possible choices to 4 sentences (out of a roughly 25 sentence reading passage.) So much for truth in advertising.

Finally, I would hope that the Senate Education Committee (as stewards of the public good) would be disturbed by the fact that the free writing portions of the test will be graded by \$13 per hour non educators hired by Data Recognition Corporation (undoubtedly one of many companies springing up to take advantage of lucrative contracts in the age of education reform). This is insulting to teachers everywhere. (AP test correctors, on the other hand, are experienced educators – in the subject matter being tested!)

Teachers are burned out by the bureaucratic overlay of federal and state mandates in our profession. Those mandates (manifested in laws and administrative rules) are sucking the joy from the job. They reveal a national disrespect for the teaching profession. The final insult is that the new testing regime being foisted upon school districts (in the name of national standards) is being promulgated by educational profiteers.

Would you throw down the challenge to legislative member to take the Smarter Balance tests yourselves? It would put you in unique positions to judge.

Respectfully yours,

Laura Paxson Kluthe
Lake Oswego teacher