

March 13, 2017

Testimony in Support of SB 351  
By Betsy Salter, Portland Public School Parent

I am testifying in support of SB 351 because I found the previous Oregon SOS audit of the impacts of implementing the Statewide standardized assessment known as the Smarter Balanced Assessments to be seriously deficient. It did not attempt to quantify the instructional time lost to taking the tests as well as the lost access to school libraries and computer labs during the months and months of testing. Worse, the audit encouraged ODE to further misinform parents about the value and usefulness of an unvalidated and worthless test - please, no more ODE propaganda about Smarter Balanced Assessments.

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/106034>

In June 2016, the Springfield School Board passed a resolution, "Calling the test (Smarter Balanced Assessments) an "ineffective measure of student growth and accountability," the five-member board unanimously approved a statement recommending that parents and guardians "strongly consider exercising their right" under state law to "opt out their student from the Smarter Balanced test."

<http://projects.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/34472935-75/springfield-school-board-urges-parents-to-ok-student-opt-out-of-state-smarter-balanced-tests.html.csp>

In January 2016, five Oregon school district Superintendents wrote to ODE and Governor Brown's Chief Education Office to urge them to consider seriously reforming Oregon's State wide Assessment system. "As the leaders of some of Oregon's largest school districts, we are keenly aware of the importance of student achievement data. We value the information provided by valid, reliable, standards-aligned assessments that are administered consistently to all groups of students in order to provide critical information to educators, parents, students and the public about our students' knowledge, skills and learning needs. **However, our current statewide assessment system carries high costs in instructional time, impact on graduation preparedness, and student and educator attention all of which detract from the benefits of the system. (emphasis added)**"

<http://www.oregonsaveourschools.org/2016/03/oregon-superintendents-decry-time-spent.html>

I believe it is also notable that last week, the U.S. Congress overturned the ESSA Accountability rules and the President has signaled his intent to sign it. I am not a supporter of this President or the current majority in Congress, but I welcome this particular act. Hopefully, the new ESSA guidance will eliminate the misuse of standardized tests to label and punish students, teachers and schools and dramatically reduce the number of standardized tests taken by public school students. Personally, I support reducing summative standardized tests to once in elementary school (e.g., 5th grade), once in middle school (e.g., 8th grade) and once in high school (e.g., 11th grade). Even more preferable would be to use the National Assessment of Educational Progress on a random sample of students in the tested grades so that not every student had to

be tested. It would still allow you to compare schools, but not waste instructional time for all students in the tested grades.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/us/every-student-succeeds-act-essa-congress.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/us/every-student-succeeds-act-essa-congress.html?_r=0)

I hope SB 351 will lead to an audit of the true and complete costs (financial and lost instructional time) of the Smarter Balanced Assessments. More importantly, I hope the audit will acknowledge that the Smarter Balanced Assessments have not proven to be a useful measure of student learning, knowledge or ability and recognize that there are models for student assessment that Oregon should consider if we truly want to support student success in school and in their post-secondary education pursuits. Please refer to Fairtest.org's report "Assessment Matters: Constructing Model State Systems to Replace Testing Overkill" for examples of evidence based assessment systems Oregon should be considering.

<http://www.fairtest.org/assessment-matters-constructing-model-state-system>

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Betsy Salter  
Portland, OR