

March 14, 2017

Testimony in Support of SB 354

By Betsy Salter, Portland Public Schools Parent

I support SB 354 because, as a parent who has been opting out our student from state standardized assessments since they were a 7th grader (now a HS Junior), I have experienced a variety of State opt out guidance - often misleading and incorrect.

Fortunately, at the school and district level, when I discussed my intent to opt our daughter out of OAKS and now SBAC tests, her school administrators and teachers were very respectful and did not try to dissuade me from opting out by suggesting the test scores provided meaningful data to support her learning or that the school would be punished by not meeting the 95% participation rate or having a lower school ranking because our daughter historically exceeded expectations on OAKS.

Unfortunately, I know from social media that there are parents across my school district, the State of Oregon and the country who have been misled and bullied by teachers, school administrators and district administrators to the point where they are told testing their child is more important than their child's educational and socio-emotional experience at school.

When HB 2655 passed in 2015, I had the opportunity to organize a focus group to review the draft ODE materials that were produced to explain to Oregon public school parents and students their rights to opt out of Smarter Balanced tests and the time frame for notifying parents of their rights. We were unanimously appalled at and offended by the misleading and threatening language the ODE attempted to use to discourage parents from opting out our students from taking the SBAC tests.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2015/11/testing\\_opponents\\_furious\\_abou.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2015/11/testing_opponents_furious_abou.html)

The language used in the ODE opt out materials were so egregiously misleading and threatening that the PPS school board was compelled to adopt a disclaimer that would accompany the ODE opt out materials when sent to PPS parents.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2015/12/portland\\_schools\\_to\\_add\\_discla.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2015/12/portland_schools_to_add_discla.html)

As a concerned parent, in October 2015 I testified at an Oregon Board of Education meeting to share my concerns about the misleading and threatening ODE opt out information that was about to be sent to Oregon public school parents for the 2015-2016 school year. I was gratified to hear then Representative Lew Frederick also give testimony indicating that he shared the concerns of parents who had reviewed the draft ODE Smarter Balanced opt out information.

[http://www.ode.state.or.us/superintendent/priorities/public-comment\\_rep.-lew-frederick.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/superintendent/priorities/public-comment_rep.-lew-frederick.pdf)

States have been abandoning the SBAC in droves. Why? Because the false claims ODE uses to discourage and threaten Oregon parents from opting out are untrue. "But with states dropping out of the tests, comparisons remain elusive. Parcc began as a [cooperation between 26 states](#), but now only six and the District of Columbia will use the test. Smarter Balanced began with 31 states — some states

joined both groups — and now counts 15.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/us/rejecting-test-massachusetts-shifts-its-model.html>

ODE should not embarrass itself by being a cheerleader for the discredited and waste of taxpayer funding Smarter Balanced Assessments.

ODE needs to serve Oregon parents and students by providing simple, straightforward instructions on our rights to opt out of Smarter Balanced tests and the process for opting out of Smarter Balanced tests. Just the facts please.

The PPS State Assessment Opt Out forms are a good starting point:

<http://www.pps.net/Page/1651>

Main points:

- Parents have the right to opt out of SBAC for any reason.
- Parents are encouraged to opt out early in the school year to help schools plan for how to accommodate opt out students.
- Parents and high school students can opt out at any time, including after the student has started testing.
- Opt out students will be provided with a learning environment while their peers are testing (Students can read, write, do homework,...)

I believe ODE misinterpreted HB 2655 when it adopted rules that limited the right to opt out of state student assessments only to SBAC. As a result, parents can use the state opt out form for SBAC, but have to opt out under pre-HB 2655 rules for OAKS Science, ELPA 21 and Kindergarten Readiness state assessments. That means we have to claim we are opting our student out of these non SBAC state standardized tests due to disability or religion. It does not make any sense to treat OAKS Science, ELPA 21 or Kindergarten Readiness tests differently from SBAC. I hope that SB 354 can be amended to allow parents to opt out of all statewide standardized assessments for any reason, not just disability or religion.

P.S. Please remove the Stand for Children SBAC propaganda from this ODE website. Even if ODE has a new website, whenever I google about Oregon’s Smarter Balanced assessment, this ODE website featuring the Corporate funded Stand “for” Children group’s propaganda pops up.

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=4302>

Sincerely and respectfully,

Betsy Salter  
Portland, OR