

Members of the House Education Committee:

When my daughter was a baby, we noticed a problem with one of her eyes. We took her to the doctor where a thorough examination was done. As things evolved she was tested for glaucoma. We discovered that she did indeed have congenital glaucoma in that eye, which required immediate and repeated treatments over a number of years, including eyedrops, wearing an eye patch, and surgeries. Today, although she experiences loss of vision, she is fine and lives a normal life. She works at a job that requires her to use her vision and drives a car. I am so grateful that the tests to discover her condition were available. If she had gone untreated, she could have been completely blind.

However, if we had been put through all that testing for no reason, if we had not noticed any problem, if she had been a child who did not have this disability, I would have been furious. She would have suffered a number of difficult procedures and we would have had to pay out a good deal of money for things that were totally unnecessary. This is where we stand today with the testing of our young children.

We are giving all children the equivalent of a full glaucoma screening when it comes to academic testing; children who exhibit no hint of a problem are taking literally dozens of tests to “make sure they’re on track” because the state, and many school districts, are requiring these tests. Often information gathered from state testing is not allowed to be retained by the teacher, who then must do her own assessments. All this testing disrupts student learning and classroom community building.

I have a friend who teaches kindergarten. She is now spends the first month of school, the first month after winter break, and the last month before school is out trying to individually test each and every child for the sole purpose of required data collection. There is nothing wrong with the vast majority of the children’s academic progress. This goes far beyond a screening. This is over testing and a waste of teaching and learning time.

I support HB 2318 for this reason. My friend, like I as a mother, does not object to screenings. My friend, like I as a mother, will definitely fight for a child to be tested if the child exhibits signs of a problem or abnormality. My friend, like I as a mother, does not appreciate her time, her students’ time, and our tax dollars being wasted on excessive and unnecessary testing.

Trust teachers. They are professionals. They love their students and want what is best for each and every one. They won’t let you down. They will ask for more testing when there’s a problem. They will know, just like I knew as a mother. And just like a mother, they won’t stop until that child gets the help they need.

Every child does not need the full treatment. We are wasting children’s and teachers’ precious time with our current practice. Please support HB 2318.

Kathleen Jeskey

Recently retired teacher with 30 years classroom experience