

2/26/2019

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I have fully supported a parent's right to opt their child out of standardized testing. I have opted my children out for years, and it has not affected their education, but in fact has made it better as they have not had to have the stress or wasted time of taking a test that is not meaningful to their education. Parents and adult students who choose to opt out of any standardized test should be able to do so with ease and without consequence.

When the Opt Out bill passed a few years ago, parents were excited because finally there was a clear process, and they didn't have to be worried about literally being called into the principal's office anymore to explain their parental decision to opt their child out of standardized state tests. The intent of those who supported the Opt Out Bill was to make sure districts were not only transparent about a parent's right to opt their child out of standardized test, but also to create a clear process that didn't question the intentions of a parent or make them feel like they have to stand on "religious" grounds in order to exercise their rights.

Since the passing of this law, the state, particularly the Oregon Department of Education, has twisted the intent of this law to make parents fearful of potential consequences their child or child's school may face if their child opts out. This is wrong and unjust. In addition, because of ODE's interpretation and roll out of this law, parents still have to jump through hoops in order to advocate for their child. This is not how relationships with parents should be built. Furthermore, because the original bill only attended to SBAC tests, parents were either told they needed to follow other procedures to opt out of other standardized tests or they would make it difficult and confusing for parents to do so. Some districts would hide or make it hard to find any paperwork necessary to opt out—hoping parents just wouldn't ask, and if they did, then the ODE marketing campaign to fight opt out would kick into gear. There have been cases where parents whose native language was not English were ill-informed or questioned by districts so as to keep them from opting out. I also heard that in Portland Public Schools students had to take the test to be considered for the Talented and Gifted Program. This is not okay.

What is an improvement with this bill is that it truly gives parents (and adult students) the ability to exercise their opt out rights for any standardized test with ease and transparency. In addition, it allows parents to submit their form electronically or in paper format. In our digital age, having the ability to use technology to help have access to services is an equity issue. Many parents are busy and an electronic form would make it more convenient for parents to take care of their child and any necessary paperwork in order to get things done in a timely manner.

If we stick to the current language, we are supporting coercion by the state to force students to take standardized tests. This does not respect the rights of our parents to make decisions for their child. Please pass SB 433. It is the right thing to do.

Respectfully,  
Tricia Snyder  
resident and parent  
Troutdale, OR