

2/23/2022

Honorable Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chairs Neron and Weber and members of the House committee on Education Committee

I ask you to kindly Oppose the SB1583.

I am writing this testimony in the capacity of SD 24 J Salem Keizer School Board Director zone 4, an immigrant BIPOC parent from India, physician who has practiced psychiatry in three countries, a member of the Color caucus, OSBA. I live in Salem, Oregon and my psychiatric practice extends from Eastern Oregon to Douglas county and also a medical staff at Salem Health.

Passing such laws will become a structural barrier for all our children to be prepared for the real world and compete in the global economy in various fields including STEM fields and the emerging high demand and high opportunity fields.

While formative assessments are important but passing laws to essentially evade and minimize summative assessments is harmful and sends wrong message. Matters such as using formative or summative assessments should be left to the district and local school boards and legislating such matters will perpetuate inequities, strengthen structural racism, and will prevent holding systems accountable.

Summative assessments along with formative assessments is important. While it is important to ensure that we continue to improve and ensure our formative and summative assessments are culturally informed, research based and together help us have a better understanding of the student's needs and most importantly to ensure that it becomes a measure for accountability of our public school system.

How can we prepare our children for summative tests if we have laws that allows our districts to minimize the use of summative tests to the bare minimum? How can our children learn to face summative tests and be prepared to take the summative tests when they must apply for medical schools, engineering schools, or other career-based college education if we send such a message or ill prepare them for such tests?

In 1999, 4% of engineering graduates were from the African American and Black communities in our nation. In 2021, again 4% of engineering graduates were from the African American and Black communities in our nation. At this rate it will take 260 years to reach racial equity in engineering field from Black Families and 76 years for all Black and Latinx workers in engineering field!
(cew.georgetown.edu: Mission not accomplished: Unequal opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latinx engineers.2021)

The real Educational Equity requires us to make intentional investments and prepare cradle to career pipelines for engineering and other high demand careers. Not by taking away our children from opportunities to participate in summative tests which helps them be prepared to get opportunities in such fields.

How can we hold our Oregon education system accountable and compare with other states or internationally if you legally pass such structural barriers to avoid summative tests? Summative tests are the lab tests for our public education system, helping us understand the gaps for various vulnerable communities and ensure we are able to recognize and allocate resources and help close the equity gap

before it widens and becomes difficult. We want to know as a system the extent of learning loss and the kind of system level resources that needs to be invested and to ensure that we can identify sooner and close the gaps. We can not change what we don't measure and spending resources without system level measures will thwart accountability, increase corruption and many vulnerable communities without advocacy or agency will be left behind and forgotten.

We know our state public education needs serious improvement. We should have the ability to see how our state education and various racial and ethnic groups, children from vulnerable communities gain from the public education compared to other states as measured by NAEP or even internally by our PISA rating. Oregon students have one of the highest rates of having to take remedial classes (72%) when they enter college and as we know the student grants and loans spent on the remedial classes does not contribute to college education and many students from vulnerable communities drop out.

When President Biden administration refused to give our state waiver from standardized testing, they did not expect that we will use such 'back door' approach to avoid accountability. As a board member, I voted against district opting out of the standardized testing even when I recognized that the students were just coming back from the school closure. Our district opted out of the standardized testing, and we became a nonstandard and failed division 22 requirement and we explained the implications on the title 1 funding and our plans to get back to the testing again.

We discussed that we want to know the extent of the learning loss, understand the threat, opportunities, and ways we can use a combination of formative and summative testing at different levels to target our equity efforts. We incorporated this as part of our key performance indicators and used the measure for system changes. For instance, the findings from our summative assessments in various grade levels beyond what is federally required helped us understand that children from various vulnerable communities needed additional resources and intentional program development. For instance, 49% ELL students in grade 8 were failing to pass the math test and need different approach. We are now advocating for two way Dual language immersion standards as a way to mitigate this.

In 2011, in Salem Keizer schools there were only 6 students from African American and Black families who were in AP/IB courses. Again in 2021 out of the 185 African American and Black students in high school, only 6 students were enrolled in AP/IB courses! I argued that we should have prepared them sooner and got them ready when they reached high school instead of removing the outcome measures so that we can prepare them for STEM and other high demand fields!

Parents always have an option to opt out. Creating a law such as this will become a structural barrier and unintentionally widen the inequities and strengthen the structural racism and promote 'Academic Red lining'. From NO child left behind, we should not end up with ALL children left behind policies.

Without any doubt, we need to rethink the way we use assessments. However, I believe that this requires a system level transformation which can not be achieved by this siloed approach. Making such legislative changes with an emergency clause during unprecedented disruption of our education and other system is not the way to approach policy making. There has been no clear thought put into the impact of such a change on other unintended consequences for our students and the public education.

As a BIPOC immigrant, it places me in an ethical dilemma if I don't speak out and ask you to oppose this SB 1583. I do not want our children to ever start thinking that they are incapable of succeeding and feel inferior because our public systems will find justification to send such a message based on this law.

Thank you for serving our communities as public servant.

Gratitude

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Satyanarayana Chandragiri MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Satyanarayana Chandragiri MD

Salem Keizer School board Director zone 4