

March 18, 2015

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Education
of the Connecticut General Assembly
Public Hearing March 11, 2015**

Raised Bill No. 1095 AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS ASSESSMENTS.

From:

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To: The Honorable Andrew M. Fleischmann, Co-Chair, The Honorable Gayle S. Slossberg, Co-Chair, The Honorable Robert Sanchez, Vice-Chair, The Honorable Gary A. Winfield, Vice-Chair, The Honorable Gail Lavielle, Ranking Member, The Honorable Toni Boucher, Ranking Member, and The Honorable Members of the Education Committee

I write to you regarding Raised Bill 1095 and offer some thoughts, questions and recommended changes. I have almost 8 years teaching experience, and an additional four years performing the Management of Education and Training programs of almost \$100 million. I have lived in Connecticut almost my entire life, and a product of the Killingly School System which in my opinion, offered an excellent education when I graduated almost 40 years ago. **I am an active member of a group in northeast Connecticut called the Quiet Corner Parents for Education.**

As I understand, the proposed bill makes changes to General Statute 10-14n Mastery Examinations to include adding a new Section 1 to direct that the State Department of Education to conduct studies, and replaces 10-14n with changes.

With the apparent chaos that is occurring within our school systems from the concurrent roll out of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the new SBAC computer adaptive test replacing CMT/CAPT, and the deployment of the data collection and sharing associated with the P-20 WIN SLDS, I agree we need some studies.

I concur with the ones proposed and offer some changes. I would expand study 1) by increasing the scope to understand *all state and federal standardized tests, assessments, and surveys* on student learning, not just the state-wide mastery examination. It is best we fully understand the impact to student learning time created by all these non-educational activities. Recommend study 3) be expanded to add and *student and family privacy rights*.

As you may be aware, the 2011 changes to the FERPA laws were changed to weaken student and family privacy rights. The law now allows collection and sharing of Personal Identifiable Data (PII) without consent with third party private companies, with various state and federal agencies such as the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and the Board of Regents through the P-20 WIN SLDS. There is much that is not understood about these matters, and I believe a study and report is warranted so that informed decisions can be made.

In addition to these studies, I offer additional studies that should be included:

- (5) evidence that the state wide mastery examination is valid, reliable, fair, and internationally benchmarked,
- (6) evidence the test is mastery, measures the appropriate knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science,
- (7) evidence that the state’s achievement gap is being closed, graduation rates are improving, and dropout rates are declining, student test scores are improving,
- (8) a report comparing legacy state-wide mastery examinations results with the new SBAC mastery examination,
- (9) a report on costs incurred and future costs associated with SBAC state-wide mastery examinations (10 year forecast).

In my view, there are a lot of claims, yet no proof. Informed decisions should be made on evidence.

As it pertains to the changes made to Section 10-14n, my thoughts and questions are summarized below:

1. 10th grade is deleted as an option year, 11th grade is when the state-wide master examination (SWME) will be administered. During testimony, I am hoping you will clarify why the choice was eliminated. Why was grade 11 selected?
2. Adds language to (c): or approved by the State Board of Education as it pertains the SBOE’s responsibility to supervise and administer the state-wide mastery examination. As written, it is not clear who would be approved by the SBOE. Anyone, a private third party contractor, another government agency? In my view, it appears this change allows the SBOE to delegate/devolve their responsibility to “supervise and administer state wide mastery examinations” to some other entity. During the hearing, can you please clarify the intent of this change and why this change is necessary? What problem are we fixing? The language does not appear correct as written.

I offer the following changes to 10-14n:

1. Add to (c): The SBOE shall not designate a test as mastery without GA approval, with evidence said examination is valid, reliable, and mastery.
2. Add new: (f) LEAs shall have access to state-wide mastery examination student tests and test item results for each student in their district.

In my opinion, the people, through our legislators should have a say in how mastery tests are administered to our children. Too much power concentrated in any government organization is not healthy in any democracy. Adding the proposed change offered to (c) would correct this problem.

After speaking with over two dozen teachers in the past four months, one of the problems with today’s roll out of SBAC is that no one at the local level has any access to anything. Adding item (f) would correct this problem.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters,

Sincerely,
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NOTE: my proposed changes to the Raised Bill are shown in blue/italicize/bold text. Black text is as proposed. [Brackets] are deleted language, underlined is proposed addition.

General Assembly

Raised Bill No. 1095

January Session, 2015

LCO No. 5215

Referred to Committee on EDUCATION

Introduced by: (ED)

AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS ASSESSMENTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (Effective from passage) The Department of Education shall conduct a study of the administration of the state-wide mastery examination, pursuant to section 10-14n of the general statutes. The department shall study (1) the effect and impact of the state-wide mastery examination ***and all state and federal standardized tests, assessments, and surveys*** on student learning time, (2) the extent to which the state-wide mastery examination is aligned with curriculum standards adopted by the State Board of Education, (3) the requirements of federal law regarding state-wide testing ***to include student and family privacy rights,*** (4) the effect and impact of the administration of the state-wide mastery examination on students in grade eleven, ***(5) evidence that the state wide mastery examination is valid, reliable, fair, and internationally benchmarked, (6) evidence the test is mastery, measures the appropriate knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science, (7) evidence that the state's achievement gap is being closed, (8) a report comparing legacy state-wide mastery examinations results with the new SBAC mastery examination, and (9) a report on costs incurred and future costs associated with SBAC state-wide mastery examinations (10 year forecast).***

Not later than January 1, 2016, the department shall submit such study to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-14 4a of the general statutes.

Sec. 2. Section 10-14n of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2015): (a) As used in this section, "mastery examination" means (1) for students enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, an examination or examinations, approved by the State Board of Education, that measure essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing, mathematics or science, and (2) for students enrolled in grade eleven, an examination or examinations, approved by the State Board of Education, that measure essential and grade-appropriate skills in reading, writing, mathematics or science, or an existing nationally- recognized examination approved by the State Board of Education.

(b) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, [2013] 2015, and each school year thereafter, each student enrolled in grades three to eight, inclusive, and grade [ten or] eleven in any public school shall, annually, take a mastery examination in reading, writing and mathematics.

(2) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, each student enrolled in grade five, eight [,ten] or eleven in any public school shall, annually, in March or April, take a state-wide mastery examination in science.

(c) Mastery examinations pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall be provided by and administered under the supervision of the State Board of Education or approved by the State Board of Education. ***The SBOE shall not designate a test as mastery without GA approval, with evidence said examination is valid, reliable, and mastery.***

(d) The scores on each component of the mastery examination for each [tenth or] eleventh grade student may be included on the permanent record and transcript of each such student who takes such examination. For each [tenth or] eleventh grade student who meets or exceeds the state-wide mastery goal level on any component of the mastery examination, a certification of having met or exceeded such goal level shall be made on the permanent record and the transcript of each such student and such student shall be issued a certificate of mastery for such component. Each [tenth or] eleventh grade student who fails to meet the mastery goal level on each component of said mastery examination may annually take or retake each such component at its regular administration until such student scores at or above each such state-wide mastery goal level or such student graduates or reaches age twenty-one.

(e) No public school may require achievement of a satisfactory score on a mastery examination, or any subsequent retest on a component of such examination as the sole criterion of promotion or graduation.

(f) LEAs shall have access to state-wide master examination student tests and test item results for each student in their district.

Statement of Purpose:

To require the Department of Education to conduct a study of the state-wide mastery examination and its relation to student learning.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]