

Testimony of Jason Bestor
Education Committee Public Hearing
March 7, 2016

Regarding: HB 5555 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT AND PROHIBITING THE INCLUSION OF PARTICIPATION RATES FOR THE STATE-WIDE MASTERY EXAMINATION IN THE CALCULATION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX SCORE".

I am writing in support of HB 5555.

Simply put, I do not want the State through the pressure it puts on teachers, building principals, and school superintendents to interfere in any way with my inalienable right to refuse to have my children tested on statewide mastery examinations. I am the parent of two elementary school students in public school and I do not want them to feel singled out or mistreated in any way because of my decision to protect them from perceived harm.

If I have understood this bill properly, I would like you to support the intent to separate Municipal Budget Ratings from penalties incurred for a school district's failure to reach a targeted "95% participation rate" requirement established by the federal government. As I understand it, that penalty is being imposed by the SDE pursuant to the intersection of its Next Generation Accountability Index and the School Classification system by which schools and school districts receive "category" rankings 1 to 5. This formula seems both unnecessary as it is not a requirement of the testing waiver agreement with the federal department of education. It also seems quite arbitrary as it imposes punitive penalties on municipalities and school districts that fail to reach the targeted participation requirement, thereby setting conditions by which my inalienable right to refuse testing and protect my children is compromised. No parent should ever feel that that their children could possibly face teacher or administrative disapproval or have those feelings spill over to other children in school.

It is not the responsibility of the SDE to discourage parents who are also citizens from exercising their inalienable right to protect their children from the perceived harm caused by state-imposed tests or any other instructional endeavor.

I encourage you to PASS HB 5555 and protect my right to opt my child out of testing without threat or interference in any way.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Bestor
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