



Testimony of
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Education Committee Hearing
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SB 380 An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations

Good afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is **Kathleen Koljian** and I am an English/Language Arts teacher and instructional coach at **Windham High School** in **Windham**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of SB 380 An Act Concerning the Exclusion of Student Performance Results on the Mastery Examination from Teacher Evaluations.

The state's narrow focus on testing has always been counter-productive due to its focus on cohorts. For a high school, the fate of the entire building rests the achievement of its 10th or 11th grade students in any given year. Variability among cohorts is inevitable—the 'precipitous' decline in CAPT scores that brought Windham the Special Master was ***entirely predictable*** given the previous performance of that cohort in elementary and middle school. I mention this because this anecdote highlights the long-standing tradition of overreliance on testing to evaluate the relative success or failure of a school or district. Every teacher I know works hard each day to improve the educational outcomes of his or her students. Every teacher I know also acknowledges that a child's well-being and educational outcomes are impacted by other realities that are well beyond a teacher's or district's locus of control. That doesn't mean we lessen our efforts; it does mean that many teachers in urban districts feel disenfranchised and disadvantaged by the linking of test scores to our professional status. The continuation of this practice is likely to drive highly-qualified teachers out of urban districts where they are badly needed.

The SBAC and SAT exams are snapshots in time and are not able to quantify student growth; in addition, a majority of high-school teachers do not teach in a 'tested' subject or grade level, leaving them with almost zero influence over testing outcomes that may have a detrimental impact on their professional evaluation. These exams were designed to assess students, not evaluate teacher practice or effectiveness. (I think it's important to remember that we do not yet know how well these exams assess our students, and the rapid changes we've seen in testing requirements highlight this). In this transitional period, the legislature has already acknowledged that the systems were not in place to fairly incorporate test scores in teacher evaluations; I hope it's become increasingly clear it is inherently unfair to use these metrics in teacher evaluation.

I urge you to support teachers in their efforts to help all students learn and reach their full potential. Please support SB 380.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.