

The Maine Heritage Policy Center Testimony to Support LD 1152 “An Act To Make the Maine Educational Assessment Optional for Kindergarten to Grade 8”

Senator Millett, Representative Kornfield and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Adam Crepeau and I serve as a policy analyst at The Maine Heritage Policy Center. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 1152.

The Maine Heritage Policy Center supports making the Maine Education Assessment optional for Kindergarten through eighth grade. Maine students in grades three through eight are subjected to state-mandated standardized tests annually.¹ On average, students spend 20-25 hours annually taking standardized tests in school, not including preparation.² If LD 1152 passes, the time students are required to spend taking tests from Kindergarten to eighth grade could instead be devoted to quality time in the classroom.

There are many disadvantages to standardized testing, especially at the state-level. For one, student fatigue can become a factor in test-taking. Student, or testing fatigue, is when test-taking becomes repetitive for students and they grow tired of the activity. As a result, students could lose interest or develop test anxiety, resulting in lower performance.³ This performance may not reflect students’ actual cognitive abilities and could give school administrators a lower score as an output.

Further, teachers in the classroom feel the pressure from their school and administrators to ensure their students perform well on standardized tests. This results in educators “teaching to the test,” which discourages creative practices in the classroom. Over 70 percent of teachers spend more than a week preparing their students for state-mandated tests.⁴ Further, another survey showed 72 percent of teachers felt moderate to extreme pressure to improve their students’ test scores.⁵ Thus, some teachers are spending weeks ensuring their students perform well on tests instead of using that time to provide them with a better education.

¹ https://www.maine.gov/doe/Testing_Accountability/MECAS/materials

² <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2015/10/26/standardized-testing-time>

³ <https://www.fastbridge.org/2017/03/avoiding-overtesting/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://www.theclassroom.com/effects-standardized-tests-teachers-students-10379.html>

Another issue with “teaching to the test” is that it undermines the purpose of standardized testing. When practice materials are utilized in the classroom, they are often very similar to the problems on the tests. Over-utilizing practice materials can result in students performing well on standardized tests but falling behind in other areas. This happens because emphasis is sometimes put on specific areas that are tested and other content is neglected.⁶

Lastly, research from 2018 indicated that teachers in school districts believed state-mandated tests to be the least useful measure to inform classroom-level, school-level, and district-level decisions.⁷ This perceived lack of usefulness by teachers expanded to “informing communities about schools' academic performance”, which is one of the primary purposes of state-mandated testing.⁸ While this perception was primarily due to the amount of time between testing and the availability of results, it still shows these tests do little for school districts.

In sum, The Maine Heritage Policy Center believes giving school administrative districts the option to opt-out of state-mandated testing for K-8 education would be beneficial for students in those grades. Therefore, I urge the committee to vote, “Ought to Pass” on LD 1152. Thank you.

⁶ <https://www.fastbridge.org/2017/03/avoiding-overtesting/>

⁷ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED586108.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.