

Testimony from Lisa Guisbond
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Good Morning. My name is Lisa Guisbond and I support all the bills that place a moratorium on the using standardized tests for graduation, teacher evaluation, or interventions in schools and districts, and bills that strengthen parents' rights to opt their children out of tests [including H497, H340, H418, S294 and H3395].

As executive director of Citizens for Public Schools, I speak to many groups of parents, teachers and students.

I always begin by asking the same question: What is school for? What do you want your children to get out of school? People consistently say they hope they'll learn how to get along with different kinds of people, be exposed to science, art, music and literature and learn how to think critically about issues facing our communities.

No one ever says they send their children to school to prepare for math and reading tests, but for too many, that's what school has become.

That's why our less testing, more learning petition has been signed by more than 5,000 Massachusetts residents. These comments by petition signers represent many others.

Lisa Quinn, a Salem parent, wrote: "High-stakes testing has created a panic in my district. Rash decisions are being made. We need a break from high-stakes testing. We need a chance to assess what we have that is working. I am very concerned as a parent that we are destroying public education in a harried pursuit of higher test scores."

Christina Bruce, a student from Athol, wrote: "As a student I'm getting frustrated that I'm not learning I'm reciting. I stopped learning when they stopped teaching what really matters. Which is to think for myself. Regurgitating facts does no good in the real world."

Renee Chutkowski, a teacher from West Springfield wrote: "If you count up all the days teachers spend on testing, they equal at least twenty percent of the days in a school year. Students are tested so much that they don't even try on some assessments because they are so burnt out, which means their results are not a true representation of their learning. Students' self-esteem is diminishing. Some students don't even want to go to school anymore. We should spend more time teaching skills students lack rather than testing all the time and making them feel defeated. All this testing is a set up for failure."

I'll also share part of the testimony from a former MA Board of Education member. Ruth Kaplan writes, "Do the right thing: Take the time needed to take stock of our current testing regime--the proposed scrapping of MCAS to be replaced by PARCC provides the perfect opportunity to assess the assessments. After all, we are Massachusetts, leaders in innovation and critical thinking. Let's apply that capacity to a review of what our state tests have accomplished and whether our future goals in public education would be

accomplished by simply substituting a new testing regime. ...Please exercise your best collective judgment and courage to consider these questions and support a moratorium.”

I'll close by saying that the harmful effects that teachers and parents report are not due to just the existence of the state test, but the major consequences for low test scores on teacher evaluations, school standing and even whether a student can get a diploma. That's why schools can't dial back the pressure and regain the time lost to testing without help from you, the legislature.