

I'm Jack Schneider, I'm an assistant professor of education at the College of the Holy Cross, I'm a former high school teacher, I'm married to a high school teacher, I know a lot of teachers, and I'm here to support the bills that either oppose the use of high-stakes tests for graduation and for other measures as well.

The first thing I want to do is echo a point that was made earlier, and that should be made repeatedly today, and that is that the chief predictor of standardized test scores is family income and not far behind that is parental educational attainment. If you are going to hold schools accountable for that, you are holding schools accountable for something that they are not in control of. Those who claim that testing is a civil right like to point to exceptions. Those exceptional schools, in some cases, are exceptional, and in many cases either lose scores of students through attrition, through policies that drive these students out, or attract a different kind of parental clientele, or engage in a practice that we've also heard about today, which is teaching to the test, narrowing of the curriculum. I invite all of you to go to some of Massachusetts' highest-scoring schools on the MCAS that have traditionally low-scoring populations, and note the breadth of the curriculum there and talk to some of the students, not only about their own experiences, but also about the experiences of students who left those schools.

Something else that I would like to talk about with regard to the consequences of high-stakes testing is the effect that it has on the diversity of our public schools. If you want to talk about civil rights, let's talk about the fact that schools are constantly stigmatized by the way that we hold schools accountable, and that as a result, well-resourced parents, who are quality conscious, do everything they can to get their kids out of schools that they often mistakenly believe to be bad schools because of narrow measures that fail to capture the true quality of the school, and that are often punishing those schools for the clientele they serve.

Those who opposed the bills today have often talked about the need to continue testing primarily as a civil right. They've presented us with a number of false choices, like we have to choose between standards, or losing standards altogether. You can still have standards without having high-stakes testing. You can pursue civil rights without punishing communities that happen to be poor or have large percentages of non-native-English-speaking people in those communities.

What is the alternative? There are lots of alternatives. We're pursuing one of them in Somerville right now. My research team has for the past year and a half has designed a new, truly comprehensive system where we began by asking community members and all stake holders – teachers, administrators, parents, non-parents what they value, we figured out how to measure those things, and we spent the last school year measuring them, measuring variables that do not correlate as strongly with family income and family educational attainment, that actually tell you more about how a school is doing. And we've worked to present that data in a way that will not scare the bejeezus out of people about schools that happen to have diverse student bodies. This is what you should spend the next three years working on.

Thank you