

SB2592

Measure Title:	RELATING TO STANDARDIZED TESTING.
Report Title:	Standardized Testing; Limitations; Exemptions
Description:	Limits public school student participation in standardized tests, prohibits the use of standardized tests scores for evaluation purposes, authorizes standardized testing exemptions, and requires the board of education to provide notice of the right to opt out of standardized testing.
Companion:	
Package:	None
Current Referral:	EDU, WAM
Introducer(s):	KIDANI, HARIMOTO, SHIMABUKURO, Dela Cruz, Galuteria



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/10/2016

Time: 01:15 PM

Location: 229

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2586 RELATING TO EDUCATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the department of education to provide public school students with a whole child education curriculum, air conditioning in certain classrooms, and decrease class size. Requires sufficient allocation of special education teachers and provides special education teachers with additional preparation time and funding. Establishes the student loan subsidy program and special fund. Expands vocational, technical, and career pathway programs. Amends weighted student formula factors to be considered by the committee on weights. Limits participation in standardized tests, prohibits the use of standardized test scores for evaluation purposes, authorizes standardized testing exemptions, and requires the board of education to provide notice of the right to opt-out of standardized testing. Requires all eligible children to attend preschool by the 2020-2021 school year. Amends evaluation program for teachers and educational officers. Increases the general excise tax. Makes appropriations.

Department's Position:

The Department of Education offers COMMENTS on S.B. No. 2586, S.B. No. 2587, S.B. No. 2588, S.B. No. 2589, S.B. No. 2590, S.B. No. 2591, S.B. No. 2592, S.B. No. 2593, S.B. No. 2594, S.B. No. 2595, S.B. No. 2596, S.B. No. 2597, S.B. No. 2598, and S.B. No. 2599.

Overall Comments

The Department of Education's (Department) vision is that our students are educated, healthy, and joyful lifelong learners who contribute positively to our community and global society. To achieve this goal, our schools and educators need the proper tools and resources.

We support initiatives aimed at improving working conditions for teachers and educational opportunities for students. In 2004, the Legislature established the "Reinventing Education Act," allowing schools the autonomy and responsibility to allocate school-based budgets to support school-identified programs and priorities, whether it be hiring more staff or purchasing supplies and materials. And, it empowered schools to make the best decisions to fit the needs of its students and communities.

Over the last decade school funding levels have not kept up with our education costs. Nevertheless, our public schools have made significant strides that have not gone unnoticed by the U.S. Department of Education and other national organizations. Attendance has improved, students are progressing and achieving more, and more students are going to college. This is a testament to the dedication of our educators and students, as well as other community leaders and partners.

The measures before you address many important aspects of education – curriculum, assessments, staffing, facilities, class size, funding, etc. However, respectfully, the Department is concerned that the crafted language, such as providing specific types of teachers for schools or a one-size-fits-all approach to instructional time or class size, detracts from school-level decision making and also circumvents the appropriate participants and venues for these conversations. Such a proposal would hinder the progress made by school leadership teams or School Community Councils, the collective bargaining process, the Board of Education which sets the policy direction for the Department, and principals and teachers in collaboration with Department leadership.

We welcome continued support from HSTA and the Legislature for additional resources for public education as well as the Department's budget priorities, as set out in the Executive Budget request. Adequate funding for our students helps to ensure a quality education that they deserve, and need, to prepare to be contributing members in our community and global society. Teachers have the most impact in ensuring a quality education. It's important that they have the support, the right tools, and the best facilities to thrive in their profession.

We look forward to working with the Committee and other stakeholders to address the issues raised in these measures.

Specific comments to the parts of the bill are itemized below.

Part II. WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2587)

The Department recognizes the importance of promoting creative thinking, self-directed learning, and cultural understanding, as well as the impact it has upon children's future outcomes and the state's economic growth.

Since 1999, the Department has provided "whole child education" through its K-12 standards-based system which includes the General Learner Outcomes (GLOs). GLOs are the overarching goals and content standards in nine areas including fine arts, social studies, Hawaiian studies, world languages, and physical education. Complex areas and schools have the flexibility to design class offerings that are best suited to their

community.

Additional funding would support increased opportunities and more diverse offerings for students.

Given that a Board of Education policy for whole child education is already in place, the Department respectfully finds S.B. No. 2587 to be unnecessary.

Part III. SPECIAL EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2588)

The Department appreciates the intent of S.B. No. 2588 to provide each teacher with \$1,690 of discretionary funds for instructional materials and equipment and to add additional preparation time for special education (SPED) teachers. This additional preparation time, during which teachers would "not be required to interact with students", would be to complete individualized education programs (IEPs), which are required for each SPED student.

Teachers' preparation time is subject to collective bargaining. Article VI of the current HSTA contract and Department regulations include provisions for preparation periods and that address providing SPED teachers with additional non-student time to work on IEPs and other related SPED duties.

If this measure is adopted, additional funds would be required to either pay SPED teachers for the additional 40 plus hours of additional preparation time, or alternatively, schools would need to establish and hire additional SPED teachers or substitute teachers to cover the instructional time for SPED teachers during the extra preparation period. Because Hawaii's SPED teaching positions are "hard-to-fill," as they are nationwide, creating more positions in order to hire more SPED teachers will not, in the near term, be a solution.

The Department is not opposed to the Legislature appropriating funding for \$1,690 for every SPED teacher to purchase additional instructional materials and equipment, provided that it does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in budget approved by the Board of Education (Board).

Given that teacher preparation time is included in the collective bargaining agreement, the Department respectfully does not support S.B. No. 2588.

Part IV. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2589)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2589 to expand vocational, technical, and career pathways programs and welcomes additional funding to support career and technical programs, provided that it does not replace or adversely impact priorities as indicated in budget approved by the Board.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs (formally known as Vocational and Technical Education) are currently offered in 46 public high schools. In school year 2014-2015, 29,356 students were registered in at least one CTE course and 4,453 seniors had completed a CTE program of study. Also, the Department awards Honors

Recognition Certificates for graduates earning Career and Technical Education Honors or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Honors.

CTE programs are organized under six Career Pathways: Arts and Communication, Business, Health Services, Industrial and Engineering Technology, Natural Resources, and Public and Human Services. The Department currently offers 41 programs of study within the six career pathways framework. Current Board Policy No. 2103 defines Career and Technical Education.

The Department is committed to improving CTE opportunities for students throughout the state. The Department respectfully finds the provisions of S.B. No. 2589 to be unnecessary, as the intent of this bill is currently being implemented.

Part V. FACILITIES (S.B. No. 2590)

The Department welcomes additional funding for heat abatement and energy efficiency measures. The Department's Ka Hei program is a comprehensive energy and sustainability program designed to provide comfortable learning environments for our students and teachers. One of the key objectives of the program is to reduce costs and energy consumption at all 256 public schools. The Department has made significant progress in working toward the goals of Ka Hei and appreciates the support of the Legislature to further these efforts.

In addition, the Governor announced his plan to air condition 1,000 classrooms by the end of 2016, and is making available GEMS financing. We appreciate his initiative and are moving rapidly to execute his proposal.

Part IV. WEIGHTED STUDENT FORMULA (S.B. No. 2591)

The Department offers the following comments:

This bill states: "Principals, in consultation with teachers and school community councils, shall expend moneys provided to the principals' school." Section 302A-1124, HRS, currently defines the role of the school community council and mandates a composition that includes teachers.

The new language related to a "superintendent's reserve" states both that the reserve is "to address needs at unique and remote schools," and that "the committee on weights shall make recommendations...for how the reserve should be used." Stating that the reserve is for "unique and remote schools" would be unnecessary if the intent is to allow the committee on weights to determine the criteria for the reserve's use.

The Weighted Student Formula (WSF) reserve was established in school year 2012-2013 based on a committee on weights recommendation that was approved by the Board. A portion of WSF funds are set aside in this reserve to provide supplemental funds to schools that demonstrate a need as combination school (e.g., K-8, 7-12), geographically isolated, has very low enrollment, or is experiencing an extraordinary circumstance. The distribution of these funds is made based on committee on weights-recommended guidelines.

Part VII. STANDARDIZED TESTING (S.B. No. 2592)

Statewide standardized tests provide one valuable source of information on student learning for students, parents, teachers, and educational administrators, but also informs educators and policy-makers about the progress of the education system. Standardized testing is an efficient method for reliably and objectively measuring the academic performance of the over 90,000 students in tested grades and 275 public schools (Department and charter) across the state. Standardized test scores provide one consistent measure, although incomplete, of school and student performance. Thus, all of the Department's accountability systems – for schools, educators, and students - use multiple measures.

Many provisions in this bill related to testing conflict with federal requirements which are a condition of receiving federal educational support including Title I funds. Despite the elimination of No Child Left Behind, its successor, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), still requires states to administer a statewide student test and use those test scores to "meaningfully differentiate" schools and identify the lowest-performing. Federal requirements for minimum participation of 95% of students continue under ESSA. And students who have individual needs may receive accommodations on a test based on their IEP, which is informed by their teachers' assessment of their needs. The Department also administers an alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities and an exemption for the English Language Arts state assessment for students with limited English proficiency who are in their first year in a U.S. school.

The Department understands that instructional time is incredibly valuable for teaching and learning. The Department is continuously reviewing the tests that are required for all students to ensure that they are necessary and valuable. Over the last two years, we have reduced the number of tests that are required. Currently, the number of standardized tests required by the state is at the federal minimum with the exception of grade 11 which is being reviewed.

The Department remains cognizant to minimize the burden on students while balancing the need to support students through measuring achievement and complying with federal requirements. As such, the Department respectfully suggests that S.B. No. 2592 is unnecessary.

Part VIII. CLASSROOM SUPPLIES (S.B. No. 2593)

The Department supports providing teachers with the resources necessary to help our students thrive in the classroom. The Department estimates the fiscal impact to be approximately \$11,900,000 per year using the calculation of \$1,000 per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions at schools which total approximately the Department's workforce of 11,100 classroom teachers, 200 libraries, and 600 counselors.

Additionally, there may be some administrative issues that need to be addressed before

implementing such a program through a debit card system, as described in the bill. These administrative considerations include processing, procurement, reconciliation, and workload issues at the school and vendor payment levels.

Part IX. TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION (S.B. No. 2594)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2594. Loan subsidies can encourage prospective teachers to contemplate careers in special education, vocational education, technical education, and career pathways.

However, the Department believes the bill may not be necessary. Federal loan forgiveness is already available for teachers in areas the Department has designated as “teacher shortage,” including special education, technical, and vocational education.

Furthermore, the program proposed for teacher recruitment and retention is complex and would be, as a result, administratively burdensome given the Department’s current systems and staffing. The Department anticipates the establishment and maintenance of the program would require substantial resources to fund the incentives and administer the program.

Part X. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (S.B. No. 2595)

The Department supports efforts to provide opportunities for early childhood education for all of Hawaii’s keiki as it is critical that they enter kindergarten ready to learn. Children deserve the best possible foundation upon which to build success and early childhood education is integral to this foundation. Children are most successful when they enter the public school system prepared with the socio-emotional and pre-academic skills that make them kindergarten-ready.

Part XI. EVALUATIONS (S.B. No. 2596)

The Department offers the following comments on S.B. 2596:

The Department recommends maintaining the existing 302A-638, HRS, which was established in 1996 and preceded the current evaluation systems which were negotiated between the State and its unions. The proposed changes should be bargained, as HSTA has previously testified in response to prior year’s efforts to legislate aspects of teachers’ evaluations.

The Department supports the intent of the portion of paragraph (a), which requires the Department to consult with the unions in establishing an evaluation program for teachers and educational officers (EOs), but notes that proposed language is redundant with existing statute and practice. A consultation process is already codified in section 89-9(c), HRS, and in the past, the Department has consulted, and at times negotiated, with Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) and Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA) regarding evaluation programs for teachers and EOs.

Many provisions of this measure are currently governed by agreements with HSTA and HGEA.

Part XII. CLASS SIZE (S.B. No. 2597)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2597 but respectfully opposes the measure for the reasons identified below.

Class size is a subject of collective bargaining and is addressed in the Department's contract with HSTA. Article VI, Teaching Conditions and Hours, Section A. 6., of the current contract states that the employer agrees to maintain the "average statewide class size ratio of 26.15 to 1."

Moreover, class size is product of school-level decisions by the principal and School Community Council in budgeting of school funds. Thus, schools are empowered to select its number of teachers based on its allocation of its student population-based budget toward personnel. Rather than class size limitations determined by the Legislature, class size is better addressed by providing additional funding for the Weighted Student Formula, which would allow schools to allocate additional resources towards personnel and thus reduce class size.

The current HSTA contract also provides a process to follow should there be issues in connection with the class size of individual classrooms. For example, a class size committee is required, with the authority to hear and investigate class size complaints and make recommendations to the Superintendent for change. If there is no majority vote on a decision of the committee, the HSTA may have the matter submitted to arbitration.

Finally, any change to the class size requirements, including a change from average statewide ratio to individual classroom maximum, would have significant cost implications due to the need for more teachers and additional facilities to house additional classrooms. The Department believes there are other, often less costly, means to provide students with quality education and to address working conditions for teachers.

Part XIII. FUNDING (S.B. No. 2599)

The Department has no position on this measure and defers to the Administration with regard to the generation of revenues to fund public programs.

Part XIV. MISCELLANEOUS (S.B. No. 2598)

The Department supports the intent of S.B. No. 2598. The additional funds would provide the Department with additional teaching positions to support the programs and needs of our schools and students. However, this bill is prescribes the subject area of

teachers to be funded, and the Department supports schools' using their autonomy to determine the types of positions necessary for their school program and community.



46-063 Emepela Pl. #U101 Kaneohe, HI 96744 · (808) 679-7454 · Kris Coffield · Co-founder/Executive Director

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE BILL 2592, RELATING TO STANDARDIZED TESTING

**Senate Committee on Education
Hon. Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Hon. Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair**

**Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 1:15 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members:

I am Kris Coffield, representing IMUAlliance, a nonpartisan political advocacy organization that currently boasts over 350 members. On behalf of our members, we offer this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2592, relating to standardized testing.

The overuse of standardized tests in Hawai'i's schools has become an epidemic. Rather than focus on student learning, our schools devote increasing amounts of time to “test and punish” frameworks, in which critical thinking and applied knowledge are replaced with rote test-taking skills that adversely impact a teacher's or schools’ statistical assessment. According to the American Federation of Teachers report “Testing More, Teaching Less: What America's Obsession with Student Testing Costs in Money and Lost Instructional Time,” test preparation and testing in heavily tested districts can absorb up to a month and a half of school time. The grade-by-grade analysis found that students spend from 60 to more than 110 hours per year on test preparation, at an estimated cost per pupil of \$700 to \$1,000 in heavily tested grades. At the same time, abandoning so-called “toxic testing” could add 20 to 40 minutes of daily instructional time to secondary school grades, according to the report, with hundreds of dollars per student—and millions of dollars overall—reallocated to the purchase of instructional programs, school technology, infrastructure upgrades, and teacher pay increases.

Make no mistake, when we discuss standardized tests, we're talking about the Common Cor(porat)e State Standards Initiative, a set of corporatized standards

that were foisted upon teachers and children across the nation without prior field testing. Developed by an organization called Achieve and the National Governors Association, and funded by the Gates Foundation, the standards were crafted with minimal public input. Under the Obama Administration's Race to the Top grant program, states were effectively told that if they did not adopt the Common Core, they would not be eligible to receive a portion of the program's \$4.35 billion in grant money. As education policy expert Diane Ravitch has said, "Federal law prohibits the U.S. Department of Education from prescribing curriculum, but in this case the Department figured out a clever way to avoid the letter of the law." The result? A precipitous decline in test scores based on Common Core's arbitrary cut scores, a lack of critical thinking development based on Common Core's arbitrary pedagogical instructional time ratios, disproportionate harm caused to English Language Learners and low-income students, further elimination of arts education, and parents and students across the nation joining the United Opt Out movement against the Smarter Balanced Assessment associated with Common Core, with students—including those in Hawai'i—literally "opting out" of toxic high-stakes tests. Even the Gates Foundation, the alchemists responsible for the Common Core monstrosity, are backpedaling on their Frankensteinian experiment, calling for a two-year moratorium on linking Common Core to teacher evaluations and their related "value-added method" of measuring performance.

Toxic testing poisons our schools' curricula, our teachers' autonomy, and our students critical thinking skills. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Kris Coffield
Executive Director
IMUAlliance

Testimony for: Support of SB2586
Committee on Education Hearing
Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

We support the bill due mainly to the fact that it ends high-stakes testing. The atrocity that is high-stakes testing is something that *every* student has poor experience with, no matter their academic ability. Ask any student and we assure that they will tell you the same thing; High-stakes testing only puts unnecessary stress on students, and prevents them from learning things that aren't strictly for test preparation. Educators should be working on easing the pressure on students and making their learning environments more student friendly, but their solutions to that is to just put *more* pressure on the students by adding onto the tests, creating a year's worth of preparation, and preventing a variety of learning topics from coming into school.

Personally, and like every other student, we have had poor experiences with standardized tests. Walking into the classroom on 'test day' is an *experience* in itself. Being told to sit down, shut up and listen to the teacher's instructions before embarking on a anxiety-ridden, multiple choice journey is probably one of the worst things we have been through in school. Those days, and the months before have filled students with dread for ages now. Though it isn't supposed to greatly affect your average grade, we have probably all been punished for a poor grade on a high-stakes test, whether that be mental, emotional or even physical. Overall, I think this is something we can all agree on, and that standardized testing is not a necessary part of any student's education.

Sincerely,
Annalise Conner and Rylie Olinger

Testimony for: Support of SB2592
Committee on Education Hearing
Wednesday, February 10, 2016 1:15pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

We, freshman of Mililani High School, support the decision to limit participation in standardized tests and allow students to opt-out of the testing because those standardized tests cause stress for students and affect teachers' morale and teaching. The standardized tests tend to stress many out because they all strive for a good test score. Some students athletes and other students who have extracurricular activities are stuck studying until late on the night before the test. Since those students are up very late, they don't get enough sleep, which may cause them to get a worse test score. Many other students may decide not to study because they just assume that the standardized tests aren't very important. Those students won't be ready for the standardized tests, which may cause false test results. When all the test results are sent back to the students and their families, they may feel that they are stupid because their results are bad. Instead of causing them to want to improve their scores and work harder, it causes a negative impact on students and may cause them to fall back on their studies.

Test scores not only affect students, but also teachers. In most schools, teachers are assessed on how well their teaching and lessons has helped students to get good test scores on the standardized tests. If some students aren't trying their hardest or were staying up studying, then teachers aren't being truthfully assessed. Teachers realize that they aren't being assessed truthfully and want to change that. However, many teachers don't know how to change the system and therefore will become an endless loop of unfairly assessed teachers and procrastinating students. Some public schools are trying to change this by having teachers spend their time preparing the students for the standardized tests instead of teaching students more in-depth lessons. All teachers are focused on are making sure that students are making the narrow goal of achieving a desired test score. If the students' test scores turn out to be below the desired score, teacher morale may drop, possibly affecting the quality of the lessons they teach students.

Personally, as high school students, we take these standardized tests. These tests tend to stress us out before and after taking the tests, along with many other students. Students like us usually stress and dread about it before, and while we take it. Most of the time, we tend to procrastinate and wait until the night before to start studying, sometimes we don't bother to even study and just wing it, not really trying to do our best. Many of us wonder what the point of taking these standardized tests if no one bothers to try their best, killing our morale while piling more stress onto the stress we already get from our regular classes. We already have to do loads

of homework from the many classes we have, why should we have to worry about standardized tests and studying for them? How does it benefit us? Why should we take these tests if we don't know the benefits? Why should we have to take tests that do nothing for us? That is why we agree with them allowing us and other students to opt-out of these standardized tests. We can avoid all the stress that comes from them and just focus on their current grades in normal classes and won't have to worry about our test scores or worry about others teasing us if we get bad scores. We will still have the option to take the test and see where we are in that specific study. We won't have to be stuck learning about how we should take the test and just learn the basics of what is on the tests. We can go more in-depth in our studies and learn more.

Sincerely, Carly Hera and Mio Istvan



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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SB 2592 - RELATING TO STANDARDIZED TESTING.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SB 2592**, relating to standardized testing.

Since the enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Race to the Top program in 2009, the Hawai'i DOE has been shifted its focus in public education from teaching to preparing for testing. Undue emphasis on testing has led to an unprecedented over-emphasis on English Language Arts and Math and less emphasis on the education of the whole-child that includes Social Studies, Science, PE, Music, Art, and Hawaiian Studies. With the imposed curriculum of Wonders and Springboard for English Language Arts, and Stepping Stones and Go Math, unfortunately research-based positive learning experiences such as Project-Based Learning and cross-curricular units that integrate English Language Arts with Social Studies to deepen student learning and connect to real-world understanding have been pushed out.

High stakes testing has led to a situation in our public schools where teachers are pressured to spend more focusing on, not even all the core classes, but mainly on English Language Arts and Math, against their better judgment. However, they are not allowed to make these curricular decisions anymore and are not being treated as the professional experts they are. Teachers know their students' learning needs best.



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The Hawaii State Teachers Association recently conducted a third party poll, conducted by a highly respected national pollster, 400 members were surveyed with a +/- of 4.9%. The results showed 82% of teachers opposed the use of standardized test scores being used to evaluate teachers. These results are similar to the Education Institute of Hawaii's Principal Survey, where 86% of principals agree there is too much emphasis on test scores. At the same time, a 2014 PDK/Gallup poll on public attitudes toward public schools found that only 31 percent of parents support using standardized test scores to evaluate teachers, despite the implementation of numerous reform increasing the use of test scores in assessing the performance of schools and educators.

That said, while we wholeheartedly endorse passage of this bill, we request two amendments to align this measure with the requirements of the recently enacted Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). First, in proposed subsection (b), we urge you to add the following clause: "...except for the purpose of determining the bottom five per cent of schools, no more than once every three years." Second, we encourage you to delete proposed subsection (e), since ESSA requires that special needs students continue to be tested.

Because toxic testing undermines genuine learning, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.

Testimony for: Support of SB 2592

Committee on Education Hearing

Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Honorable Chair Kidani and Committee members,

My name is Gavin Lee. I am a freshman at Mililani High School and I do support SB 2592. The standardized tests in the public school system is a waste of resources. Students should opt out of these tests. Teachers are spending more time on test prep then teaching their subjects. Huge companies make tons of money selling the tests and test supplies. The DOE has stated that it "More complex problems and challenge them to support their answers with explanations and evidence." In Hawaii it's called the SBAC. Its part of the common core standard, a way for kids all over the USA to learn the same educational topics. It doesn't help us in any way.

Since being in public school we've have multiple tests in the past years. Examples of these test are HSA, SBAC, and the Renaissance test. These tests were challenging because we had to use everything we learned to solve the test. But tests like SBAC is unfair because we don't know what some things are because we didn't learn them at the time. The HSA was good because it tested the actual things we learned in that school. I was privileged to have good elementary school, Mililani Mauka. We learned to take notes and solve work. Thanks to the testing of the SBAC the DOE has made school that much harder.

Sincerely,
Gavin Lee

Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 2592
Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, February 10, 2016

Dear Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

Since No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2001, Hawai'i schools have gradually been forced to shift their focus from teaching to testing. Although it may not have been the intention, teachers have spent more and more class time preparing their students for tests, and much less time engaging in rich and meaningful instruction that does not pertain directly to the narrow goal of achieving a desired test score.[1] The precise impact of standardized testing has no doubt differed from school to school, grade-level to grade-level, classroom to classroom. Such variation is based on many factors, including school demographics and the relative ability of faculties and administrative teams to withstand or curb the negative impact of corrosive assessment practices. Despite such variation, there now exists a clear consensus among educators in Hawai'i and across the U.S. that the overall effect of testing on public schools and public school culture has been detrimental if not devastating.

Many educators were initially enthusiastic about the now famous Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as the new standards seemed to grant educational consistency from state to state and were reportedly more "rigorous" than previous state standards documents. Enthusiasm quickly waned, however, as it became apparent that, in the words of one recent commentator, CCSS had come "shrink-wrapped" [2] with a pair of highly complicated and expensive testing systems (the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the PARCC Assessment) from which states were to choose. It appeared that schools would be devoting even more time to standardized testing than before, when states were free to develop their own tests.

The final turn of the screw took place in 2012 when Hawai'i received the \$75 million dollar Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. To qualify for the grant, states had to agree to evaluate teachers based on their performance. Similar to evaluation systems in other RTTT states, the Educator Effectiveness System (EES) was developed in order to satisfy this requirement. Teachers' ratings would reflect their students' scores on the new tests, and these ratings would determine pay raises as well as job continuance, despite considerable research showing that teachers' impact on student performance on standardized tests is minimal.

Indeed, research has placed heavy doubt on the so-called "value-added method," or VAM, used in Hawai'i to calculate teacher effectiveness: "[T]he tests used for calculating VAM are not particularly able to detect differences in the content or quality of classroom instruction." [3] Furthermore, the American Statistical Association has established that the VAM formulas fail to determine effectiveness "with sufficient reliability and validity." [4] The same teacher can receive wildly fluctuating results from year to year. VAM scores are even currently being used as part of EES to evaluate teachers who do not even teach, and have never taught, the students currently being assessed.

The impact of the adoption of this faulty evaluation process by the Hawai'i DOE has been a widespread drop in teacher morale, as teachers recognize that they are not being evaluated in a way that is fair or reliable. The other outcome, of course, has been an

even more narrow and rigid focus on testing in Hawai'i public schools. The adoption of Educator Effectiveness System, which links student test scores to teacher evaluation through the now widely delegitimated "value-added method" (VAM), have virtually guaranteed that many teachers, in order to maintain their rating as "effective" (as opposed to "marginal" or "unsatisfactory"), and even survive as teachers, feel that they must compromise their professional integrity and decision-making by "teaching to the test."

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the NCLB replacement signed into law in December of 2015, states will be required to maintain standardized testing but will be granted considerable leeway regarding what the tests will look like, how they will be implemented, and the uses to which data collected from them will be put. While there is varying opinion as to the relative merits of ESSA, we find ourselves at an exciting turning point if for no other reason than the shift of decision-making power with regard to testing from the federal back to the state level. ESSA allows a state to adopt other types of assessment beyond standardized tests, and teachers know that more authentic assessments are more useful in informing instruction. We now have the dual task of reversing the damage done by years of toxic testing and rebuilding an educational culture based on what teachers know through experience and what educational research confirms will lead to the highest degrees of success for our students. We believe that the following six steps must be taken:

1. Minimize the amount of time devoted to standardized tests. This will involve re-examining our current commitment to use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, which is expensive, time-consuming, and of doubtful quality.[5]

2. Seriously question the many uses to which data from the Smarter Balanced Assessment is currently being put, including Strive HI, which the Department of Education touts as "a diagnostic tool to understand a school's performance and progress and differentiate schools based on their individual needs for reward, support and intervention,"[6] but which unfairly ranks schools from best to worst - a ranking that is based heavily on the highly questionable data from the Smarter Balanced tests.

3. Remove the barriers that are currently preventing teachers from making the best decisions for their students. This entails not only a thorough reexamination of the standardized testing currently in place, but also a rethinking of the tremendously time-consuming teacher evaluation system currently in place – a "top-down" system that teachers have almost unanimously decried as wasteful, misguided, and professionally insulting.

4. Grant teachers the critical autonomy and professional dignity, both to work collaboratively to devise the formative assessment methods and practices best suited to their particular students, and to determine the fittest methods for evaluating their own professional performance.

5. Support teachers with the funds and resources they need to reestablish an educational culture that consists of a well-rounded curriculum and an approach to assessment that, rather than ranking, promoting, and penalizing teachers and schools according to narrow and mismeasured parameters, serves the goals to which sound assessment has always been put – namely, understanding what students have and haven't learned from instruction and adjusting that instruction accordingly.

6. Support the rights of parents in determining how their children spend the school day. Parents must be allowed to opt-out or refuse standardized testing and demand

their children receive an education that is focused on real learning and that truly prepares them for a better future. Furthermore, the Board and Department of Education must inform parents of their rights to refuse standardized testing without fear of penalty to or retaliation against students, parents, teachers, and schools.

As educational historian and critic Diane Ravitch has written, “Genuine school reform must be built on hope, not fear; on encouragement, not threats . . . on belief in the dignity of the human person, not a slavish devotion to data; on support and mutual respect, not a regime of punishment and blame.”[7] Hawai‘i public schools have too long languished in a system that has generated fear, employed threats, and assigned blame to teachers, seriously affecting the decisions of teachers and principals and casting a gloom that has become pervasive in schools, ultimately affecting our students and their families. It is now time for us to reverse the damage done through “slavish devotion” to bad data coming from mediocre tests. This will only happen when teachers are granted the support, respect, and dignity they need to determine how and in what measure their students are to be tested.

Sincerely,

Amy Perruso, Ph.D
Mililani High School

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Heading: Testimony in support of SB2592

Testimony for: Committee on Education Hearing on Wednesday, February 10, 2016 1:15pm

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Debbie Anderson. I am a teacher at Waiakea Intermediate School on the island of Hawaii. As a teacher of over 25 years in Hawai'i, I am writing in support of SB2592 appropriate STANDARDIZED TESTING, SB2586 The Schools Our Keiki Deserve Act subcomponent Part VII, which "Limits public school student participation in standardized tests, prohibits the use of standardized tests scores for evaluation purposes, authorizes standardized testing exemptions, and requires the board of education to provide notice of the right to opt out of standardized testing."

Since the 2001 re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), education has endured fifteen years of an experiment being regarded now as a failure, according to NAEP and international measures.

Hawai'i schools have gradually been forced to shift their focus from teaching to testing. Although it may not have been the intention, teachers have spent more and more class time preparing their students for tests, and much less time engaging in rich and meaningful instruction that does not pertain directly to the narrow goal of achieving a desired test score.[1] The precise impact of standardized testing has no doubt differed from school to school, grade-level to grade-level, classroom to classroom. Such variation is based on many factors, including school demographics and the relative ability of faculties and administrative teams to withstand or curb the negative impact of corrosive assessment practices. Despite such variation, there exists now a clear consensus among educators in Hawai'i and across the U.S. that the overall effect of testing on public schools and public school culture has been detrimental if not devastating.

Negative Impact of assessing the Common Core State Standards

Many educators were enthusiastic initially about the now infamous Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as the new standards seemed to grant educational consistency from state to state and were reportedly more "rigorous" than previous state standards documents. Enthusiasm waned quickly, however, as it became apparent that, in the words of one recent commentator, CCSS had come "shrinkwrapped"[2] with a pair of highly complicated and expensive testing systems (the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the PARCC Assessment) from which states were to choose. It appeared that schools would be devoting even more time to standardized testing than before, when states were free to develop their own tests.

State Spending on K-12 Assessment Systems

The state that spent by far the most on testing on a per-student basis is Hawaii.[3] Hawaii (\$105) among the highest spending, the highest end of the range, so high above it is considered an "outlier" which distorts the state average too much. We find that larger states tend to spend substantially less, per student, than smaller states, which is not surprising given that larger states save on fixed costs like test development by spreading them over more students and may have more bargaining power. This 2012 finding is consistent with SBAC's data from 2010, which found that Hawaii spent the most per student.[4]

Moment of Opportunity

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the NCLB replacement signed into law in December of 2015, states will be required to maintain standardized testing but will be granted considerable leeway regarding what the tests will look like, how they will be implemented, and the uses to which data collected from them will be put. While there is varying opinion as to the relative merits of ESSA, we find ourselves at an exciting turning point if for no other reason than the shift of decision-making power with regard to testing from the federal back to the state level. ESSA allows a state to adopt other types of assessment beyond summative standardized tests, and teachers know that more formative authentic assessments are more useful in informing instruction. We now have the dual task of reversing the damage done by years of toxic testing and rebuilding an educational culture based on what teachers know through experience and what educational research confirms will lead to the highest degrees of success for our students.

We believe that the following six steps must be taken:

1. Minimize the amount of time devoted to standardized tests. This will involve re-examining our current commitment to use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA), which is expensive, time-consuming, and of doubtful quality.[5]
2. Seriously question the many uses to which data from the Smarter Balanced Assessment is currently being put, including Strive HI, which the Department of Education touts as “a diagnostic tool to understand a school’s performance and progress and differentiate schools based on their individual needs for reward, support and intervention,”[6] but which unfairly ranks schools from best to worst – a ranking that is based heavily on the highly questionable data from the Smarter Balanced tests.
3. Remove the barriers that are currently preventing teachers from making the best decisions for their students. This entails not only a thorough re-examination of the standardized testing currently in place, but also a rethinking of the tremendously time-consuming teacher evaluation system currently in place – a “top-down” system that teachers and administrators have almost unanimously decried as wasteful, misguided, and professionally insulting.
4. Grant teachers the critical autonomy and professional dignity, both to work collaboratively to devise the formative assessment methods and practices best suited to their particular students, and to determine the fittest methods for evaluating their own professional performance. This is how Finnish educational system reaches the top of the international rankings repeatedly.
5. Support teachers with the funds and resources they need to reestablish an educational culture that consists of a well-rounded curriculum and an approach to assessment that, rather than ranking, promoting, and penalizing teachers and schools according to narrow and mis-measured parameters, serves the goals to which sound assessment has always been put – namely, understanding what students have and haven’t learned from instruction and adjusting that instruction accordingly.
6. Support the parental rights in influencing how their children spend the school day. Parents must be allowed to opt-out or refuse standardized testing and demand their children receive an education that is focused on real learning and that truly prepares them for a better future. Furthermore, the Board and Department of Education must inform parents of their rights to

refuse standardized testing without fear of penalty to or retaliation against students, parents, teachers, and schools.

Genuine School Reform

As educational historian and critic Diane Ravitch has written, “Genuine school reform must be built on hope, not fear; on encouragement, not threats . . . on belief in the dignity of the human person, not a slavish devotion to data; on support and mutual respect, not a regime of punishment and blame.”[7] Hawai‘i public schools have too long languished in a system that has generated fear, employed threats, and assigned blame to teachers, seriously affecting the decisions of teachers and principals and casting a gloom that has become pervasive in schools, ultimately affecting our students and their families. It is now time for us to reverse the damage done through “slavish devotion” to bad data coming from mediocre tests. This will only happen when teachers are granted the support, respect, and dignity they need to determine how and in what measure their students are to be tested.

[1] Walker, Tim. "NEA Survey: Nearly Half Of Teachers Consider Leaving Profession Due to Standardized Testing - NEA Today." NEA Today. NEA, 02 Nov. 2014. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

[2] Hagopian, Jesse. "Arne Duncan. Testocracy Tsar. Educational Alchemist. Corporate Lackey." The Progressive, 01 Jan. 2016. Web. 14 Jan. 2016.

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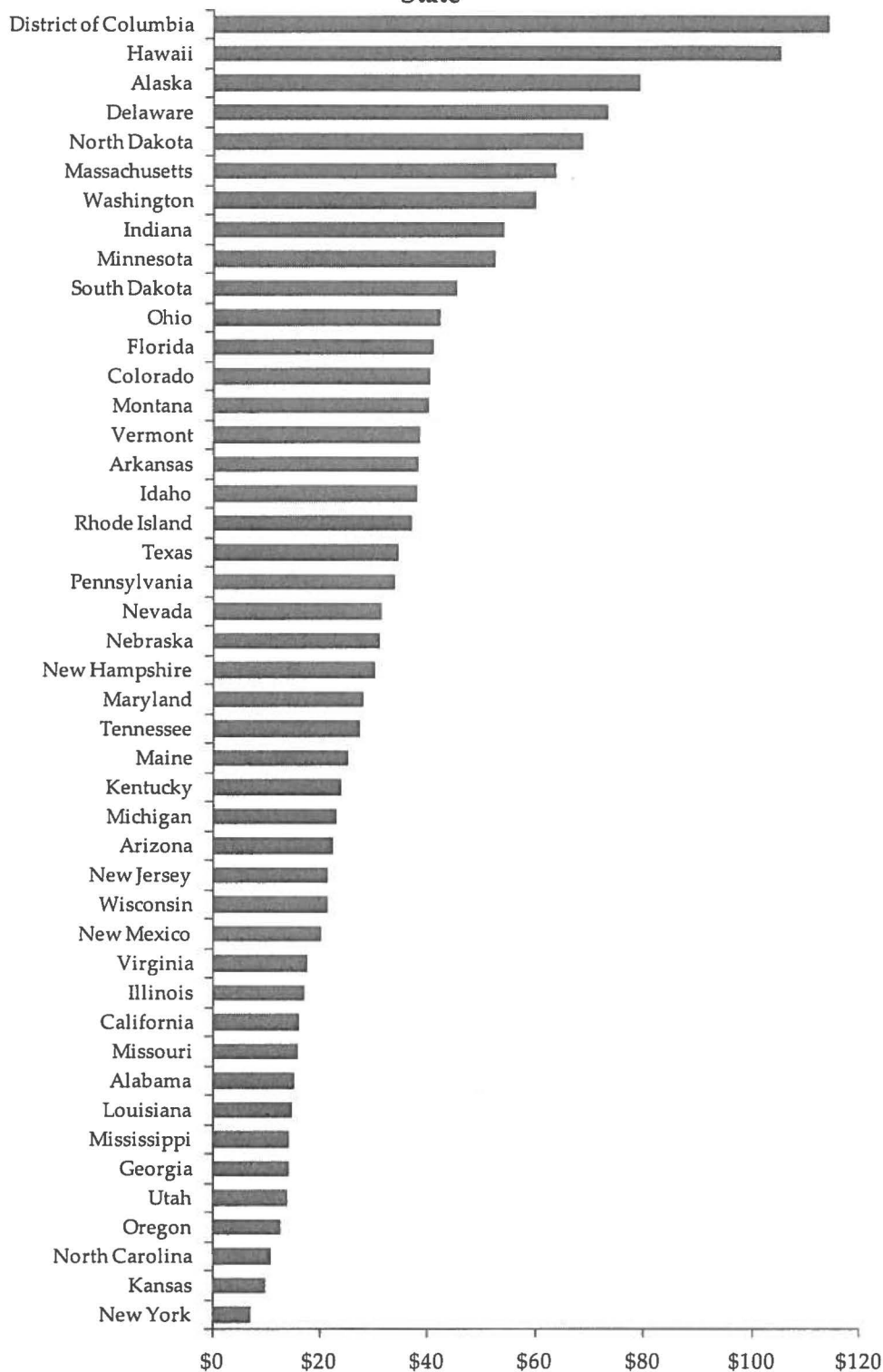
[4] In a recent report written for the National Research Council, Douglas Harris and Lori Taylor estimate that the costs of standards, assessments, and accountability systems totaled (as of 2007) about \$167 per pupil, which is about 1.8 percent of per-pupil spending and totals about \$8.1 billion per year (in 2012 dollars). However, these estimates are based on data collected from only three states and reflect the costs of standards and accountability systems in addition to the assessment costs (Douglas N. Harris and Lori L. Taylor, "The Resource Costs of Standards, Assessments, and Accountability," Final Report to the National Research Council, March 2008).

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[7] Ravitch, Diane. (2013). Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Figure 1. Per-Pupil Costs of Main Assessment Contracts, by State



Source: Table A2
State Spending on K-12 Assessment Systems