

LATE

1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: [www.hsta.org](http://www.hsta.org)

Corey Rosenlee  
President  
Justin Hughey  
Vice President  
Amy Perruso  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: SCR 157/SR 119 - REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO  
REDUCE THE USE OF STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE PUBLIC  
EDUCATION SYSTEM.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2016

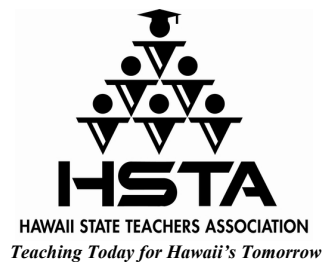
COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **strongly supports SCR 157/SR 119**, requesting the Department of Education to reduce the use of standardized testing in the public education system.

Since the enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Race to the Top program in 2009, Hawai'i has been obliged to shift its focus in public education from teaching to testing. Undue emphasis on testing leads to a situation in which teachers spend more time preparing students to take tests and less time educating, while students spend more time taking tests and less time learning.

According to a 2014 study conducted by the National Education Association, 72 percent of teachers feel considerable pressure to improve test scores. Over half of teachers surveyed reported spending too much time on testing and test preparation, with the average teacher spending approximately 30 percent of their time on tasks related to standardized tests. 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.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: [www.hsta.org](http://www.hsta.org)

Corey Rosenlee  
President

Justin Hughey  
Vice President

Amy Perruso  
Secretary-Treasurer

Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

When discussing standardized testing, one must also make note of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), about which many educators were initially

enthusiastic. When first put forward, the new standards seemed to grant educational consistency from state to state and were reportedly more “rigorous” than previous state standards. Enthusiasm quickly waned, however, as it became apparent that CCSS came coupled with exorbitant 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. CCSS exemplified what has become known as “test-driven curricula,” in which time spent taking and preparing for tests is imbricated within an educational plan that replaces creativity and critical thinking with test-taking skills and rote content.

Yet, this no longer need be the case. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in December of 2015, provides states with increased flexibility in the use of standardized testing, including eliminating federally mandated inclusion of standardized tests in teacher evaluations, and allowing states to choose what test to use for annual school assessments. ESSA also permits states to limit the amount of time that students spend preparing for and taking standardized tests, and provides funding to states for auditing and streamlining assessment systems. We have the opportunity to make bold changes to our “test and punish” education culture. We must seize it.

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



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

---

**TESTIMONY FOR SCR 157/SR 119, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION TO REDUCE THE USE OF STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE  
PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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

**Wednesday, March 23, 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 HCR 157/HR 119, requesting the Department of Education to reduce the use of standardized testing in the public education system.

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 (in Hawai'i, each test, itself, costs \$65, discounting resources and personnel needed to administer each test). 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 Core 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. Both President Obama and the U.S. Department of Education have called for an end to overtesting. 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.

Now, we have hope. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in December of 2015 and set for robust implementation in December of 2016, provides states with increased flexibility in the use of standardized testing, including eliminating federally mandated inclusion of standardized tests in teacher evaluations, and allowing states to choose what test to use for annual school assessments. ESSA also permits states to limit the amount of time that students spend preparing for and taking standardized tests, and provides funding to states for auditing and streamlining assessment systems. We can abolish the "test and punish" education culture that enslaves our teachers and students. We must move quickly to set them free.

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 resolution.

Sincerely,  
Kris Coffield  
*Executive Director*  
IMUAlliance

**LATE**

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [blawaiianlvr@icloud.com](mailto:blawaiianlvr@icloud.com)  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for SCR143 on Mar 23, 2016 13:15PM\*  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 1:39:11 PM

---

**SCR143**

Submitted on: 3/23/2016

Testimony for EDU on Mar 23, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

| Submitted By            | Organization        | Testifier<br>Position | Present at<br>Hearing |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| De MONT R. D.<br>CONNER | Ho'omana Pono, LLC. | Support               | Yes                   |

**Comments:**

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)

Aloha Chair and Committee Members,

I want to speak to you from the heart as a parent of a child in Hawaii public schools.

My child is a ten year old, a fifth grader, at one of the best elementary schools in the state. My daughter Olivia has actually grown up, completed her entire elementary education experience under the 'accountability' policies that are now in place thanks to No Child Left Untested. Because of the overemphasis on test scores and the ways in which they are used to punish schools AND teachers, she has not benefitted from ANY sustained inquiry-based projects. NOT ONE. FOR HER ENTIRE ELEMENTARY EXPERIENCE.

Her experience is one painful example of how the overemphasis on testing and 'accountability' has crippled learning in our state. Even my daughter knows that spending half the reading doing scripted ELA curriculum and the other half of the day working on the scripted Common Core math is not helping her become a lifelong learner.

I don't blame my daughter's teachers and administrators – they are amazing professionals who engaged in all of the kinds of 'whole child' instruction prior to Race to the Top. They are simply implementing the administrative direction that flows directly from board policy.

But thanks to the new federal law, we can break from this horribly destructive recent history. My daughter still has a chance to engage in experiences that will cultivate her love of learning. Thanks to new federal law, ESSA, we can now actually create appropriate teacher-developed standards and authentic assessments.

The legislature can play a key leadership role in this process. In making this statement of principle, you can provide the leadership so necessary for other state policy makers who look to the legislature for guidance. You can ensure that our children can begin to have access to the exciting learning experiences that they deserve. ESSA offers you a light at the end of this dark tunnel. But ignoring the problems that have arisen as a result of standardized testing will not get us out of the tunnel - a "reinvention" of assessment is essential.

Thank you.

Amy Perruso  
Mililani High School

## Testimony for Senate Resolution 157 – Relating to Education

Honorable Chair Kidani and committee members,

My name is Beatrice DeRego, a Hawaii DOE teacher for almost 20 years in multiple positions, including many leadership roles. My current position is as the Testing Coordinator for a combined intermediate and high school in a Title 1 school.

I am writing in support of SCR157 precisely because the DOE top leadership is sadly out of touch with the realities of testing in our schools on a day to day basis, a position even the Hawaii Board of Education has questioned.

As a rural school we have limited resources and infrastructure, although our complex leadership has worked consistently to prevent obstacles to DOE mandates – the major one being testing. Testing at our school – only to complete the “reduced requirements” – currently entails locking up our two computer labs from mid-February until the end of school in May. While the DOE suggests that the 4-5 hours a student spends in Smarter Balanced (SBA) testing is minimal, this actually equates to students being removed from their Language Arts and Math classes for approximately two weeks at our school since testing is completed in their core classes, rather than requiring students to spend two stressful days doing nothing but testing.

In particular, the Performance Task of the SBA is not only intensive, it is demoralizing and humiliating to many of our students. The attempt to mimic a project based experience within a 2-3 day window is like suggesting we force the legislature to make all decisions within a week. Projects take time because their nature requires reflection, collaboration, and relevance – all lacking from this particular part of the SBA.

While the department is to be commended for removing the requirement for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to take both the SBA and the ACT Aspire, our juniors are still required to take both the ACT and the SBA. Neither test providing actionable data a teacher can use to make adjustments to instruction for student performance success. Additionally, students in Advanced Placement (AP) classes will also be taking end of course exams.

Finally, while the department currently mandates the specific tests mentioned, their structural and curricular processes require districts and complexes to complete a multitude of additional tests to implement the department’s Response to Intervention (RTI) initiatives. Students take additional screening tests in core subjects, diagnostic tests to determine specific areas of need, and if they are in a resource program, may take monthly or weekly formative tests to assess their progress in the program. Of course, teachers also regularly assess students, because that is part of their professional responsibility.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity for Hawaii to take back ownership of our public education system by exploring every avenue of change allowable. It cannot be done with minimal tweaking. It also cannot be done without Hawaii finally giving voice to the professionals who can best lead the way – teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns and suggestions with you.

Beatrice K. DeRego

**LATE**

**From:** [mireillellsworth@yahoo.com](mailto:mireillellsworth@yahoo.com)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** TESTIMONY for SCR157 Wed. Mar. 23 1:15 pm  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 8:07:12 AM

---

TESTIMONY in support of SCR157

Hearing on Wed. March 23 at 1:15 pm  
Conference Room 229

Aloha Chair Kidani and Committee Members,

My name is Mireille Ellsworth, a teacher in Hilo at Waiakea High School for nearly 12 years. I urge the committee to pass this resolution to reduce high-stakes testing much more than the Department of Education has done thus far.

As we learned from Mr. Parker from the National Governors Association, the new federal law, ESSA, gives the state of Hawaii a unique opportunity to move away from these tests which are expensive and have a negative impact on what is emphasized in the classroom.

In the case of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, it has not been put through adequate field testing and studies to show that it correlates with student success, yet the publisher of that test make claims that it shows college and career readiness. At the lower grade levels, this test is developmentally inappropriate as test makers did the cheapest thing possible to increase "rigor" by making reading passages two grade levels higher than the grade of the students being tested. Furthermore, the test scores are reported too late to be useful for instruction.

Parents should have the right to opt out of these tests. I have seen students with disabilities forced to take standardized tests who have high anxiety and are literally depressed by their scores not to mention the peer pressure they endure when their peers are asking "What did you get?" Some of these students have conditions like autism and are not even on a diploma track because it has been determined that they are in high school for socialization, not academics, yet these same students are coerced into taking the tests.

Many students know that the test "doesn't count" for their grade, so they do not put in the effort they should. At the elementary level, it is understandable since the tests are mostly far too advanced and make the child feel "This is too hard. I can't do it, so why even try?" For older students, they don't feel the need to push themselves if it doesn't appear on their report card. It would not solve the problem to include it on their report card, however, because teachers are not allowed to see the test, so teachers are going by blind faith that the prescribed curriculum is aligned with the tests. I have little faith as there are errors in the



curriculum which is so new, as are the tests, that there are bound to be errors.

Even for students who are motivated by the tests, it's not to excel. Because the school is so focused on the students "in the middle," all the students seem to care about is "Did I pass?" That is not what education is about, and for these high-stakes standardized tests to also be tied to teacher evaluations and pay, it creates a toxic situation for principals, teachers, and students to "pass." How is that promoting excellence in our students?

My colleagues and I are looking into alternative assessments that would be much more meaningful to students and be memorable learning experiences for the rest of their lives. Hawaii could be at the cutting edge of this model. Since we are a state-wide district, we have a golden opportunity to fulfill the federal requirement for assessments and reporting as well as create learning experiences for our students that will demonstrate their strengths, highlight their talents, and show them the power of learning when the inquiry is into something that piques their interests and shows them how to build upon their natural talents.

Please pass this resolution to show future generations how visionary the 28th Legislature was in steering public education in Hawaii in the right direction!

Mahalo,

Mireille Ellsworth,  
English and Acting Teacher,  
Waiakea High School,  
Hilo, Hawaii  
Sent from Windows Mail

**LATE**

**From:** [mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov)  
**To:** [EDU Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [tabraham08@gmail.com](mailto:tabraham08@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for SR119 on Mar 23, 2016 13:15PM\*  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 23, 2016 1:06:22 PM

---

**SR119**

Submitted on: 3/23/2016

Testimony for EDU on Mar 23, 2016 13:15PM in Conference Room 229

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier<br>Position | Present at<br>Hearing |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Troy Abraham | Individual   | Support               | No                    |

**Comments:**

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

Do not reply to this email. This inbox is not monitored. For assistance please email [webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@capitol.hawaii.gov)