

Dineen J. Majcher

Comments before Senate Education Committee

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Honorable senators, my name is Dineen Majcher and I am a parent of a 10th grader. I am also one of the founders of Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment – TAMSA is a statewide grass roots organization of parents and interested community leaders who are concerned with the current STAAR testing regime. Tens of thousands of Texas citizens recognize the painful and obvious truth that this system is not working as intended, and is detrimental to education in Texas. We support strong accountability and are not opposed to testing. As Dr. Trevino has testified/will testify, the data does not show that years of standardized testing has helped students. In fact, state achievement on SAT and ACT tests has remained relatively flat - there simply is no valid correlation between standardized testing and improved college readiness. Thus, perpetuating the same standardized testing path of the past does not help Texas students. As Dr. Schroeder from Senator Seliger's district testified, he is anticipating a 30% increase in the dropout rate for the class of 2015 if we do nothing to correct the course.

The testing requirements in Texas are more onerous than any other state, and indeed Texas pays more than any other state for standardized testing. Out of 31 states surveyed by the Center for Education Policy, 29 require between 0 and 5

tests to graduate. Only Texas requires 15 tests, with the next state requiring 6. 10 of the 31 states allow substitution of other tests (ACT/SAT/AP/IB) – Texas does not although we have filed a petition with TEA to implement this statutory requirement.

In terms of tax dollars spent, Texas is at the very top of that list. Between 2000 and 2015, the state of Texas will have paid to the vendor Pearson \$1.178 billion. As you know the cost for STAAR is approximately half a billion dollars. Stop and think about how that money could have been used for real classroom education benefits over 15 years. New York has spent only \$32 million with Pearson. Massachusetts, often hailed by many as the Number 1 education state in the country does not use Pearson, and only requires 3 tests for graduation – English, Math and one Science.

We have children – our children – in a system that is badly broken. One million students in 8, 9 & 10th grades are slated to take EOCs in a few months – EOCs with high stakes including a requirement to take and pass 15 tests. Waiting to see how this experiment will work is unacceptable. Now is the time to show Texas power and courage. This system may have been good in concept. In application it is catastrophic. Here are some immediate solutions:

- If you want to test college readiness, give every 11th grader in Texas a nationally norm referenced test such as the ACT. It's what colleges

- actually use to test readiness, and would give us a real comparison across districts in Texas as well as with other states. You should align this with other nationally norm referenced tests such as ITBS, PLAN, Stanford.
- If your intent is to have an independent Texas test to evaluate whether we are teaching your TEKs, give three tests – one English, one Math and one Science at a 10th grade level – this will fulfill NCLB to the extent it is still in effect.
 - Remove the high stakes and utilize tests for diagnostic not punitive purposes.

Thank you for the opportunity to present comments today. I am happy to respond to questions.