

June 13, 2015

Bristol Warren Regional School District School Committee
151 State Street
Bristol, RI 02809

Dear Members of the School Committee:

As you prepare to vote on the Proposed Comprehensive Assessment Policy, I ask that you consider the substantial changes that have occurred in our state since the policy was first introduced. Based on those changes, as well as the numerous other reasons I have raised previously, I ask you vote against passage of this policy in its current form.

Most recently, the Rhode Island General Assembly House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare held a hearing to discuss House Bill H6285, which specifically addresses how testing in our state will be handled. At the hearing, the legislators were clear – it is not their intent, nor is it the intent of this or any bill they introduce, to require Rhode Island students to take any statewide standardized test. The representatives on the committee, including the chairman, specifically stated that they would be revising the current draft of the bill to remove the requirement for all students to take state standardized tests. They also affirmed that it is the committee's intent for our state to leave the PARCC consortium and no longer administer this test to our students.

Please take the time to watch the hearing and hear the testimony from Tim Ryan, head of the Association of Superintendents, Tim Duffy Executive Director of the Association of School Committees, Dr. Janet Johnson from Rhode Island College and others regarding this bill. From their testimony you can see that all of these witnesses affirm and agree on the point regarding the language to not require students to take these tests. You can find a link to the video of the hearing here: <http://tinyurl.com/ndxnssr>

My testimony that night, and my plea to you on this issue as well, is simply this: It's clear that testing in our state is in flux. Today and constantly, our district and our state are looking for ways to improve the student experience while meeting federal and state guidelines. As a person who is paying attention to this issue, I can see that there are many who are working hard to create a positive and rewarding educational experience for our children in our public schools. But I can also see that, from any given individual family's perspective, the continuous changes regarding standardized testing are frustrating, incredibly difficult to navigate, and, in some cases, particularly detrimental to the children we are all dedicated to serving. While very smart people are working hard to figure out what's best, real kids and real families in real time are struggling with these fluctuations.

All I ask is that, as elected officials serving our district's students, you respect a family's individual right, affirmed by our legislature, to not participate in state standardized tests.

Specifically, I'd like you to simply remove the language in this policy that requires participation in state assessments. As you well know, there is no federal or state law that requires students to take these assessments. Given the ever-changing circumstances on this issue, there is no reasonable rationale for this committee to impose a higher standardized testing burden on families in our school district than is required in the rest of the state, and indeed the rest of the country.

I'm attaching, for your reference, the written testimony and white paper prepared for our legislature by Dr. Janet D. Johnson co-Director of the Ph.D. Program in Education and Associate Professor of Secondary Education at Rhode Island College.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I am happy to answer questions or engage in a dialogue on these issues and look forward to hearing your responses to the questions I've raised.

Respectfully,

Tracy Ramos