

To: House Education Committee

From: Dr. John Nimmo, Portland resident and Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education, Portland State University.

RE: Written Testimony in Support of HB 2318

Date: January 31, 2019

I am submitting this testimony as a private Oregon citizen and not as a representative or employee of PSU.

Based on my 40 years as a teacher and teacher educator in early childhood education in the United States and Australia, I am convinced that extensive research and experience from the classroom clearly show that wholesale standardized testing of children below third grade is not helpful, and for many children, is detrimental to learning.

Over the past 20 years, an ever-increasing proportion of education funding has been poured into various forms of standardized tests (and associated published curricula) with the following results:

- Teachers having less time to devote to classroom-based assessments and documentation that could create a more meaningful and culturally relevant curriculum.
- Teachers feeling pressured to *teach to the test*, and as a result not taking the time to be innovative and to use their knowledge of their children to design learning experiences.
- As school systems spend millions of dollars on purchasing and implementing tests, and their associated curriculum, less resources are available to ensure classrooms are inclusive, technologically equipped, and well-resourced.
- Young children are being inaccurately identified for further diagnostic testing and referral to special education.
- Young children have less time available to engage in meaningful learning experiences and instead experience the anxiety that comes with high stakes testing.
- Problems in tests being able to account for important differences across culture and ability.
- Promoting a focus on deficit-thinking, rather than being proactive about identifying and leveraging the strengths children may have that do not fit into preconceived notions about intelligence and academic proficiency.

Excellent teachers of young children know that they must develop a curriculum that is responsive to children's ideas, questions, and their family and cultural context. To do this, teachers can engage in a range of classroom-based assessment, observation, and documentation activities designed to provide them with relevant information about the strengths and needs of the children in their classroom. Instead of pouring money into standardized tests that rarely provide useful information to teachers about their children *in a*

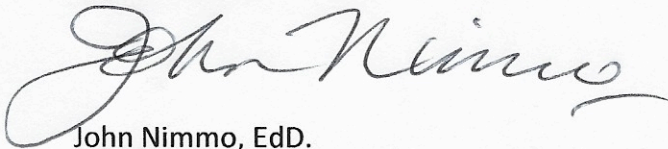
timely manner, funds could be used to support professional development of teachers in authentic and developmentally appropriate forms of assessment and to provide out-of-classroom time to discuss their findings.

Finally, the research literature and the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is clear that standardized forms of testing are not developmentally appropriate for children in the early childhood years. Children are notoriously bad test-takers and there can be a wide variation in results from one day to the next based on factors such as their relationship with the person implementing the test and the particulars of the day and setting. As the executive director of lab school at the University of New Hampshire for 10 years, I saw how the careful classroom documentation of the experienced early childhood teachers always provided more detailed, relevant, and timely information for both designing curriculum and adjusting their programs to meet diverse needs than we gained from tests. Given time, autonomy, and professional development, teachers were able to easily identify children who need more specific diagnostic testing by an expert – something that is permitted by this bill.

Standardized tests are an efficient tool for collecting quantifiable information about large numbers of people, but they miss the nuances of children's learning and respond to a standardized image of the child – essentially making invisible the complexity of early development across culture, family context, and individual variation.

It is time for school districts to stop wasting important funds on testing and to invest in teachers, the creative tools they need to support their work, and the broader school infrastructure.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Nimmo". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

John Nimmo, EdD.
Portland, Oregon