

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing you in support of SB 433 which would put more assurances around the language on the opt out information and procedures provided by the Oregon Department of Education.

I am a parent who opts their children out of state testing. I currently have a child who does very well in school. I also have another child who is currently not doing so well in school, which we discovered about a year ago was due to a birth defect that had gone unrecognized since his birth until he was near the end of second grade. Now that it has been corrected through surgery he is catching up, but that process is going to take some time.

One reason I opted my kids out originally is that I am concerned about what happens to the data that is collected by the state. When I questioned that early on, I did not get good answers. I am now very thankful that I made that decision because my son who has experienced the health issues would have had things in his academic “permanent record” that were related only to his health condition which went unrecognized for so long due to how rare it is. He was increasingly in pain since the day he was born, which he himself didn’t even recognize since it was “normal” for him. At one time, shortly before we discovered that his gall bladder and liver were not functioning properly, his discomfort was even attributed to “possible ADHD”. Now that surgery has corrected the physical issues, his learning is taking off.

How did I get my information on opting out? It certainly was not from the state opt out information form. If I had believed what was on that form, I would have thought that I was actually doing damage to my child by opting him out of testing, when in fact what I did was prevent him from being labeled as deficient and harming his self esteem further. He has already had trouble with that, being a very bright little boy who was not able to understand that a lot of his struggles with reading could be attributed to his unrecognized physical pain. Instead, I got my information from family members who are educators, and from being an involved parent. I knew that I didn’t need the state assessment to tell me where my child was at academically because I knew that his teachers were letting me know and that they did not get their information about his progress from the state assessment.

I think it is incredibly wrong for the state to propagandize and give parents incorrect information to try and convince them to take a test, particularly a test that collects data to go heaven knows where and to whom. There definitely need to be more checks on how this information is presented to families because the information that is being presented now is just plain incorrect.

If we have to be lied to in order to convince us to take these tests and submit our children’s data, then something is very wrong. Please pass this bill to help ensure that parents get correct information when making decisions about their children’s education.

Sincerely,

Mali Geister
Oregon City