

MARK HASS
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 14



COMMITTEES:
Finance and Revenue, Chair
Education
Labor and Business

OREGON STATE SENATE

February 6, 2020

Chair Wagner and Committee,

For the record, I am Sen. Mark Hass, representing Beaverton and Aloha in Washington County. I am testifying in support of SB 1572. It removes the requirement that high school students pass the Essential Skills test in order to graduate high school. We have had testimony the last two years from educators and students telling us that this test no longer serves a purpose. In fact, we heard from several young people who were forced to delay their graduation to complete the test—people who later went on to lead successful lives despite this drawback.

This bill does not reduce the academic rigor of earning a diploma. It is just repealing a relic that no longer works. This bill leaves intact credit graduation requirements that are among the highest in the country. And it leaves intact local school districts' ability to add graduation requirements.

The Essential Skills test only serves to the harm students who fail them. The exams do not produce any claimed benefits for those who pass. There is no evidence that students who pass these tests are more likely to succeed in college or in their careers.

In fact, recent studies show that a student's high school GPA is a stronger predictor of first-year college performance than the 11th grade Smarter Balanced Assessment. Those studies also show that reliance on exit exams is tied to higher high school dropout rates.

Students that fail these tests report feeling defeated. They also report feeling unmotivated to retake the test, work on performance-based assessments, or even continue high school.

And we know, those who do not pass and do not receive a diploma will earn a lot less over their lifetimes. These are students who have passing high school GPAs and have completed all other high school requirements, and yet they will not graduate.

SB 1572 also provides an opportunity for schools to award high school diplomas to students who failed the Essential Skills test, so it has the potential to undo years of harm.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Hass".

Senator Mark Hass
District 14 | Washington Co.-Beaverton-Aloha-SW Portland
900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301