

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a retired Eugene 4j middle school teacher and also a former adjunct professor in the Teacher Education program at the University of Oregon College of Education. I urge you to pass SB 1583, the bill designed to minimize some of the harmful impacts of mandated standardized testing in Oregon.

Four years ago, I helped to organize a meeting between ODE top administrators and Monty Neil, then Director of FairTest, the national organization that has challenged the misuse, overuse and flaws of standardized testing practices for over 35 years.

Dr. Neil made a detailed presentation of New Hampshire's innovative statewide assessment system, developed to meet the new provision in the 2015 federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the replacement for the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It was NCLB that set our nation on the road to our current system dominated by the testing-sorting-tracking system that has made schooling unrecognizable.

The new ESSA allows states to apply to be an "Innovative Assessment Pilot" state to develop an alternative statewide system of local assessments to meet the federal assessment requirements. Currently, New Hampshire, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia and Massachusetts are doing so.

Dr. Neil's concise presentation detailed the specific components of New Hampshire's system. New Hampshire has implemented a system that has made meaningful strides in freeing students and teachers from the oppressive, lifeless and failed system of Smarter Balance testing -- a system that Oregon teachers and students despise, a system that chews up months of the school year, a system that produces mounds of useless data, a system that has driven creative and passionate teachers out of the profession, no longer able to countenance being forced to teach to the test.

Dr. Neil's informed presentation was met with polite nods and perfunctory statements about the need to improve the Smarter Balance system. Then the meeting was over. It was clear to Dr. Neil and me that the ODE had no intention of pursuing this opportunity for change allowed by the new federal law.

SB 1583 will direct the ODE to begin what should have begun in 2015 when the ESSA became law or in 2017 when Monty Neil detailed the New Hampshire innovation.

So much time has been lost. So much damage has been done by the punitive, time and resource-wasting Smarter Balance system. No, we can't unring the bell. But we can finally begin to change what should have been changed long ago.

Please pass SB 1583 and please actively support its passage in the Senate.

Sincerely,

Roscoe Caron, member, Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE)