

February 3, 2022

To: House Education Committee

Re: Support for HB 4124

Dear Chair Alonso Leon and members of the committee---

My name is Alyssa Nestler, and I have been a public school educator for 11 years. When I was a classroom teacher in Springfield, I taught 1st-3rd grades, and all the blends in between.

Early on in my career I recognized that the assessments I was provided with were not meeting my information needs or that of my students. The diagnostic, interim, and curriculum assessments provided to me as a teacher, and in some cases required of my students, largely did not help inform my instruction, and often felt disconnected from what my students and I needed to know in order to move their learning forward. This spurred me to become a member of Oregon Education Association's Quality Assessment Practices cadre, which has allowed me to provide professional development and coaching to educators across the state in quality assessment practices.

Through my own personal experiences administering assessments, and speaking with my colleagues around the state of Oregon, specifically my colleagues who work with our youngest kindergarten and first grade students, I am aware that the timing and quantity of assessments required of our youngest learners can be concerning. When young students' first experience of public education are numerous and time intensive assessments within the first few days of school, that can be intimidating in and of itself, but when the purpose of assessments are misunderstood and the information misused, then that can lead to inappropriate instructional experiences that will not lead to learning gains. Some of these children experience losing streaks, in which they begin to feel failure early and often. It is so important to nurture the natural curiosity and love of learning in the early grades to set students up for success. I have witnessed first hand how our assessment systems can serve to bolster, or to inhibit individual student growth.

We are living through unprecedented challenges in public education. The pandemic has led to detrimental effects on students' emotional well-being, contributed to teacher burnout and attrition, and placed a huge burden on parents and families. It has also presented us with great opportunity, because we are forced to acknowledge that our systems are not working for students or educators. Now, we can imagine what could be, and re-build our assessment systems to be more human centered. With that in mind, it only makes sense that in order for education leaders to provide guidance and support to local districts about how to do this, we need to gather information about what assessments are being used, when these are administered, to what student populations, and for what purposes. We have been moving in this direction for years now, and this moment in time is offering hope for positive change, but in order to be intentional about what changes can and should be made, surveying information is necessary.