



Oregon Department of Education

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Office of the Deputy Superintendent

255 Capitol St NE

Salem, OR 97310

Voice: 503-947-5600

Fax: 503-378-5156

HB 2714: Provides Students May Be Excused from Statewide Assessment House Committee on Education February 9, 2015

Good afternoon Chair Doherty and members of the committee. For the record I am Derek Brown, Director of Assessment and am here to testify on HB 2714. HB 2714 provides that parents have the right to excuse their student from the statewide assessment and requires that an alternative method of showing proficiency for diploma purposes be provided. The department is neutral on the bill.

Background:

Oregon first used a state-developed assessment in 1999 and the federal government first required states to conduct student assessments in 2002 as a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires a 95% participation of students in each school or the school fails to have enough students participate. This clause was put into the law to prevent schools from holding out low-performing students from the test to avoid low school test scores.

Under current law, students may be excused from statewide assessments if they have a disability or for religious reasons.

Current law allows students to show their proficiency in order to graduate in a number of ways: the statewide test, work samples, and an identified score on the Advanced Placement, SAT, PSAT, ACT, WorkKeys, Compass, and International Baccalaureate assessments that reflect proficiency. Not all districts offer all assessments to their students.

Issue:

While student testing began as an accountability for schools and school districts to ensure they were effective and using tax dollars efficiently, some students, parents, and educators believe that testing holds little value for students and absorbs too many resources that could be better spent educating children.

Legislation:

HB 2714 directs the State Board of Education to adopt requirements and guidelines for administering statewide assessments of students and that these standards include allowing parents to “opt out” their student from taking the assessment.

School districts must offer options to such a student who opts out of statewide testing if the student is trying to graduate and must show proficiency on their Essential Skills.

Concerns:

If significant numbers of students opt out of the test, results will distort a district’s students’ performance. The public will have distorted information on which to determine the effectiveness of their neighborhood school.

While Oregon has a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind Act, that waiver is dependent on a 95% participation rate for its statewide, summative tests. The passage of HB 2714 puts federal dollars at risk.

Fiscal:

As written, the bill anticipates a surveys of teachers and administrators on current standardized testing regimes in 197 districts and 19 education service districts. Work groups will likely also be formed.