



## ***More Teaching Less Testing Act***

### Bill Summary

Our public schools are the heartbeat of our communities and a pillar of our democracy. **They should be funded and supported as such to foster the joy, curiosity, rigor, creativity, collaboration, and problem solving skills of every child to reach their full potential.** Developing the value and ethic of lifelong learning is fundamental to our commitment to educational equity and racial and economic justice. This requires focusing on 21st Century learning skills, wraparound social and health services that center the whole child, and ensuring our educators are afforded the time, space, and resources to provide holistic, experiential, and culturally responsive learning opportunities. High quality assessments, when designed and implemented thoughtfully in service of high quality curriculum, can be an important part of a balanced system that supports continuous, deeper learning and positive outcomes for all students.

**The Problem:** Today, we spend less time teaching, and more time testing. States are required by the Every Student Succeeds Act to administer statewide summative assessments annually in grades 3-8. **The emphasis on annually testing every student using standardized summative assessments negatively impacts what gets taught in our schools and how it is taught, and is out of step with peer-reviewed research on K-12 assessment.** For too long, limited time and resources in our chronically underfunded public schools have been focused on standardized tests that don't adequately measure learning – or opportunities to learn – and are used inappropriately to make high-stakes decisions about grade retention, graduation, teacher evaluations and more. Furthermore, these high-stakes summative assessments rarely give us the kind of information necessary to fully understand the causes of inequities or to support educators, schools, and districts in providing high quality learning opportunities that meet the needs of every student.

There are a wide range of formative assessment practices that educators, schools and districts can and should be encouraged to develop and use to evaluate student learning, guide teaching, and inform families about their children's progress on a regular basis. Rather than empowering our teachers to use classroom time for experiential, project-based learning experiences, our schools today face tremendous pressure to test prep, or 'teach to the test,' in such a way that often harms our students.



**The *More Teaching Less Testing Act* would address these issues by:**

- Building on the flexibility of ESSA, promoting ways to improve assessment and accountability for the ultimate purpose of increasing student learning opportunities, and addressing one of the several interconnected factors exacerbating the nationwide teacher shortage.
- Allowing states more flexibility to administer summative assessments and design assessment systems that support high quality teaching and learning. The bill would eliminate the current federally mandated testing schedule for summative assessments in math, reading & language arts, and science, and instead establish the following menu of options for states to choose from:
  - Grade-span testing – states could test each of math, RLA, and science once in each grade span (3-5, 6-9, 10-12)
  - Representative sampling – states could administer assessments in math, RLA, and science to representative samples of students each year in grades 3-8 and once in 9-12
  - Combination testing – states could design a system that uses either of the following combinations:
    - Grade-span + representative sampling
    - Grade-span + matrix sampling
- Engaging educators, school leaders, families and advocates in determining an appropriate limitation on assessment and test preparation time.
- Establishing an Assessment Taskforce to Evaluate Testing Practices and Recommend Assessment Practices that Promote High Quality Teaching
- Authorizing \$66 billion annually for Title I – quadruple the current authorized funding level – to correct chronic underfunding of our public schools and prioritize public education in our federal budget.
- Scaling up and improving ESSA's Innovative Assessment Demonstration program. The bill would authorize \$100 million annually for the program, marking the first time the pilot program has gotten an authorization of dedicated funds.
- Prohibiting states from using federally mandated statewide assessments as the sole or dominant factor for large-scale retention policies, high school graduation decisions, teacher evaluations, or school rating systems.

This bill *does not* eliminate summative assessments, but rather makes space for a more balanced assessment system that allows for both formative and summative assessments in service of high quality teaching and learning that meets the needs of all students.