

June 14, 2019

The Honorable Connie M. Leyva
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2080
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to AB 751 (O'Donnell)

Dear Senator Leyva:

On behalf of the organizations below, we are writing in opposition to AB 751 (O'Donnell). This measure would permit Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to administer an alternative high school assessment, approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in lieu of the assessments required under the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). If enacted, this bill would pave the way for districts to replace the 11th grade CAASPP assessment with either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the ACT. We oppose the expanded use of the SAT or ACT, and are concerned that alternative assessments would undermine the California School Dashboard.

AB 751 would reinforce and expand the use of the SAT and ACT, both proven to be biased. Further relying on these exams would benefit wealthier students and communities with greater access to test preparation. As the recent college cheating scandals have shown, we should be wary of these exams. Furthermore, the assessments themselves are biased as questions disadvantage communities of color whose experiences in middle and high schools are already inequitable and not reflected fairly in test questions.

Incoming students can already take the SAT and ACT for free. Both testing companies already provide high schools with a limited number of fee waivers for low-income students. Unfortunately, too few students know about these waivers and the state should find ways to encourage high schools to increase awareness of the waivers, not further our state's financial support of testing companies.

AB 751 would also weaken the California School Dashboard. Since all districts will no longer use the same assessments, comparing student achievement across the state will be very difficult. It will be harder to identify districts in need of help or best practices that should be replicated. Although AB 751 requires comparability, Stanford University Professor and testing expert Edward H. Haertel wrote in his letter of May 23, 2019: "Methods for expressing scores from different tests on a common scale, or for using and interpreting them as if interchangeable, fall far short of providing the degree of comparability California's state-of-the-art school accountability system would require."

Low-income students and students of color need a fair college admissions process and an effective School Dashboard. AB 751 would expand the use of a biased selection tool and undermine a foundational element of the School Dashboard.

For these reasons, we must respectfully oppose AB 751.

Sincerely,



The Education Trust—West
Dr. Elisha Smith Arrillaga
Executive Director

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Californians Together
Shelly Spiegel-Coleman
Executive Director

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Campaign for College Opportunity
Jessie Ryan
Executive Vice President

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Canal Alliance
Omar Carrera
CEO

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Career Ladders Project
Linda Collins
Executive Director

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Community Coalition
Carlos Cazares
Academic & Wellness Coordinator

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The Latino and Latina Roundtable
Of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley



The Latino and Latina Roundtable
of San Gabriel and Pomona Valley
Jose Calderon
President

GO Public Schools
Jonathan Klein
CEO

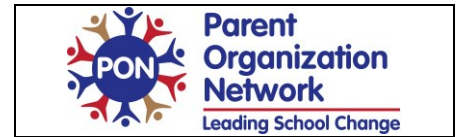
Kid City Hope Place/Urban
Foundation
Anne Hawthorne
Executive Director



Miller Advocacy Group
Marci Miller
Attorney at Law



National Center for Fair & Open
Testing (FairTest)
Robert Schaeffer
Public Education Director



Parent Organization Network
(PON)
Araceli Simeon
Project Director



Public Counsel
Mayra Lira
Staff Attorney

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mayra Lira".



Stockton Schools Initiative
Dr. Nancy Huante-Tzintzun
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Huante-Tzintzun".



Student Senate for California
Community Colleges
R. Cameron Cowperthwaite
Vice President of Legislative Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Cameron Cowperthwaite".

cc: Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell
Members of the Senate Education Committee
Brandon Darnell, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Roger Mackensen, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus