

Good morning. I am Marty Gartzman, a Senior Associate and retired Executive Director at UChicago STEM Education at The University of Chicago. Today I am representing Illinois Families for Public Schools and a coalition of seven other community groups who endorsed a letter that we'll be sending you later this week. The letter addresses ISBE's proposed response to the US Department of Education's affirmation that states will be required to administer standardized tests this year.

We understand the intense time pressure the DOE's test edict has created for you, and we applaud your attempt to minimize the burden of the tests on Illinois schools, districts, teachers, and especially students.

We suggest, however, that there are additional things that can be done, even within the current parameters, that will benefit Illinois schools during this trying time. We urge you to consider or clarify the following points:

First, we urge ISBE to affirm that parents are able to make a decision to have their children opt out of the State test. The federal government has stated since 2015 that states have the right to allow families to opt out of testing. Unlike many other states, Illinois only allows students themselves to opt out of testing. Parents should be able to submit a simple letter to indicate that their child will not be testing—for all students younger than 18 years old. This year more than ever, but *every* year, parents should be able to make this decision on behalf of their families.

Second, we urge you to consider additional changes for this year to the Access portion of the Illinois assessment system. The Access test is time consuming and does not provide the kind of immediate information about students' language proficiencies that teachers need to tailor their instruction. Administering the Access assessment this year creates an ~~additional and~~ unnecessary burden for schools, teachers, and districts. More importantly, the Access exam robs some of our most vulnerable learners of valuable instructional time for an assessment that will not benefit them. Please consider providing a blanket waiver for the Access exam.

Third, there remains confusion about whether current 12th graders will be required to complete an SAT exam in order to graduate in June. We urge you to affirm clearly to all stakeholders that no diplomas will be withheld from any senior in Illinois this year due to lack of participation in the administration of a state-mandated SAT.

We understand the incredible pressures on you to make immediate decisions that will minimize the test burden this year on students and schools. The issues you are confronting now, however, highlight a wide range of problems with our current assessment system. We urge you to use this experience as an opportunity to do a soup-to-nuts rethinking of how we assess and how we use assessment data in Illinois, so that it provides far more useful and actionable information to Illinois families and Illinois schools.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Illinois school children and families.