



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Illinois State Board of Education
100 North 1st Street
Springfield IL 62777

14 December 2021

Dear Superintendent Ayala and Illinois State Board of Education Members:

As Illinois legislators, we fully support making improvements to our educational system. However, we have serious concerns about the process and substance of your proposed changes to the state assessment and accountability system.

We are very encouraged by your delaying your vote on the Request for Sealed Proposals (RFSP) for a standardized testing vendor this past spring. Before any future vote on the RFSP, there must be meaningful engagement of students, parents, educators, and administrators who will be directly impacted by any proposed changes to state testing.

The State Assessment Review Committee (105 ILCS 5/2-3.64a-5) is an independent body statutorily charged to provide recommendations to you and the General Assembly on state testing, but to date has had insufficient opportunity to exercise this independence and weigh in on your plan. Your appointed Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has also expressed concerns over your proposal.

Assessment researchers and practitioners have questioned the effectiveness of interim assessments in increasing student achievement. They have also raised concerns about over-testing; the negative impacts of testing on curricula, particularly in low-income Black and Brown communities; expansion of testing in grades K-2; and the significant investment Illinois has already expended on standardized tests despite little, if any, long-term improvements to student outcomes. These concerns have not been adequately addressed by ISBE.

The proposed plan to restructure and expand state testing will impact teaching and learning for another generation of students. It will require significant additional investment—almost \$228 million dollars over 10 years—during a time when students and communities have severe physical, mental, and socioemotional needs. Additionally, this plan and its expansion of high-stakes state testing contradicts the pedagogy and practices ISBE advocated for in the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading

Standards. ISBE cannot make such consequential decisions without being responsive to the input of students and families who will be directly affected. Nor should ISBE ignore the research, expertise and experience of educators and administrators. Any new system of assessment must have a clear evidence base in research.

We encourage you to engage and work collaboratively with education stakeholders across the state to research and co-create a balanced and humanizing assessment system that promotes deep, meaningful learning through rich, culturally relevant and challenging curricula.

Sincerely,

Representative Jaime Andrade
Representative Dagmara Avelar
Representative Kelly Cassidy
Representative Margaret Croke
Representative Eva-Dina Delgado
Representative Mary Flowers
Representative Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz
Representative Edgar Gonzalez
Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar
Representative Will Guzzardi
Representative Michael Halpin
Representative Barbara Hernandez
Representative Elizabeth Hernandez
Representative Lindsey LaPointe
Representative Theresa Mah
Representative Natalie Manley
Representative Joyce Mason
Representative Aarón Ortíz
Representative Delia Ramirez
Representative Sue Scherer
Representative Denyse Wang Stoneback
Representative Ann Williams

Senator Omar Aquino
Senator Christopher Belt
Senator Meg Loughran Cappel
Senator Jacqueline Collins
Senator Sara Feigenholtz
Senator Robert Martwick
Senator Antonio Muñoz
Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas
Senator Robert Peters
Senator Mike Simmons
Senator Elgie Sims
Senator Patricia Van Pelt
Senator Karina Villa
Senator Celina Villanueva
Senator Ram Villavalam