

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Ann Marie Banfield, and I am the Education Liaison for Cornerstone Action. Cornerstone Action represents roughly 6,000 New Hampshire residents. Cornerstone's interest in education is to focus policies and legislation on literacy, academic excellence and parental rights. I appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee today on HB 603.

Cornerstone supports HB603 which would require school districts to adopt a policy allowing a student to be exempted without penalty from any assessment, questionnaire, or survey based on a parent's or legal guardian's determination that the assessment questionnaire, or survey is objectionable.

Almost daily I receive an email from a parent who is informing me that their school administrator is attempting to deny them their parental rights by rejecting their notification to opt out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Some parents in New Hampshire do not want their children taking the Common Core assessments for various reasons. Some are citing privacy concerns, data collection, and psychometric testing to name a few.

As you know, several months ago I made an inquiry to Commissioner Barry on a parent's right to refuse the standardized assessment. A Technical Advisory was issued and I thought this would clear up any confusion among administrators, school board members and parents. Unfortunately this seems to have created more confusion among all people involved.

The Technical Advisory states:

*ADDENDUM – Added January 13, 2015*

*Although RSA 193-C-6 requires all public school students to participate in the statewide assessment (one assessment in English language arts, mathematics and science), there are no laws in the State of New Hampshire or rules at the New Hampshire Department of Education that would penalize a student for not participating in the statewide assessment. Additionally, the same is true if a parent determined that they would not allow their child to participate. However, the district will incur a lower participation rate, which is reported to the public.*

This seems easy to understand yet many parents have saying their school administrators said they

have no right to opt their child out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Some parents are also being told that they need to make a formal request directly to the New Hampshire Department of Education to ask permission to opt out of this assessment.

I want to be clear that many of the parents are in no way seeking permission from any government organization to exercise their parental authority however they are concerned by the disregard for their parental rights. Will the school ignore their refusal and force that child to take the assessment if they attend school? This is a concern parents are now facing.

HB 603 puts into statute much needed clarity.

The “No Child Left Behind” testing and accountability craze has left school districts battling with parents instead of working collaboratively on matters involving their children.

Some of this week’s proposed Bills were examples of parents trying to take back their fundamental rights. I believe this is the result of a system that was once based on mutual respect to one that has systematically deteriorated. Schools are now in this race to meet participation rates and parents are trying to protect their children from methods that are clearly harming many children.

Thousands of parents now refusing to allow their children to take the Common Core assessments in New York. WHY? Well as one teacher put it, it’s child abuse.

New York is about a year ahead of New Hampshire in administering Common Core assessments and the resistance not only exists among parents but teachers too. Teachers are speaking out on the damage these assessments are doing to children and started a group called: The Teachers of Conscience Movement.

This movement has just begun in New Hampshire and teachers like Kelley Tambouris in Manchester has described the negative impact these assessments are having on the children and teachers.

I met with a Principal this week who said that his biggest concern was that children will feel stupid when they take these assessments and commented on how teachers with graduate degrees were having trouble figuring out some of the questions on the math assessment. Why? Because the math questions were confusing to teachers with a graduate degree and he knew there was no way a child could figure out what was being asked of them.

Teachers are now describing the Common Core Assessments as a set up for failure.

<http://truthinamericaneducation.com/common-core-assessments/new-jersey-education-association-runs-anti-parcc-ads/>

Parental rights are affirmed in the U.S. Constitution and the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld those rights.

HB603 along with the other proposed legislation we heard this week affirms parental rights.

There is no infringement upon local control in education when parental rights are affirmed. It is a basic and fundamental right we are afforded and for those reasons, I urge you to support HB 603.