



The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
Testimony from Jason Judd, Executive Director, Educate Maine

Neither For Nor Against

L.D. 277 “An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools”

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Jason Judd and I am the Executive Director at Educate Maine, a business-led education advocacy organization. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony neither for nor against L.D. 277.

Educate Maine’s mission is to ensure that all Maine people are prepared to succeed in their education and careers and able to reach their highest educational potential. As a member of the MaineSpark coalition, we collaborate with more than 100 organizations to increase education attainment for Maine people and meet the state goal of 60% of Maine adults with a postsecondary credential of value by 2025.

This bill specifically eliminates the inclusion of the SAT as a method for assessing student performance in the state assessment program. We released a policy brief last year entitled “The Maine School Testing Debate,” which provides an overview of the state assessment system, offers interviews with Maine educators about how the assessment system is working, and shares recommendations on how to improve the student testing environment in Maine. This brief can provide the committee with important background information to aid the discussion of this bill. The brief is available at www.educatemaine.org/research-reports.

We have heard from a variety of Maine educators about the benefits and drawbacks of the SAT as part of the state assessment program. Benefits include wide access to an assessment that often directly connects to students’ college application processes and the alignment between the SAT and current math standards. Drawbacks include that educators often are not able to use the data from the test results to support student learning and that some students are disadvantaged because they do not have the same access to prep materials as other students. On both sides, the overwhelming feedback we received from educators is how often the state assessment changes. We need to take a long-term view of the state assessment system and not keep changing the expectations for students and educators.

The Maine Department of Education recently announced the formation of specific assessment redesign focus groups to be collaborative thought partners as they work to refine, reframe, and

redesign the assessment and accountability system. They also shared an ESSA Advisory/Maine Technical Advisory Committee will be established to help analyze focus group feedback and examine best practices to develop an assessment and accountability plan. This group will need to balance the needs of students while meeting federal and state assessment requirements. Excluding the SAT from consideration during this process feels premature. We want educators and Maine DOE staff to look at all of the best practices and various assessments through this collaborative process to make recommendations on the appropriate assessment system for Maine.

Maine's assessment system is essential to help understand how students are doing so we can continue to support our students and educational institutions appropriately. We encourage you to work closely with the Maine Department of Education and educators across the state on next steps to improve Maine's assessment system through analyzing the research, evidence, and experiences of our students and teachers. This work will inform the decision making process and illuminate the best ways to measure student progress and growth, as well as meet our state and federal obligations for student assessment and accountability.

Jason Judd
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