

House Education Testimony - HB21-1067 College Admission Use Of National Test Score

First Name	Last Name	Position	Representing	Testifying	Text of Testimony
					<p>As a career professional in the field of higher education, specifically college admission advising, I write today in support of HB1067. There's no denying the requirement of standardized testing limits access for students seeking higher education. What is questioned however, is an admission offices ability to make the decision on a students path towards success at their institution.</p> <p>I can absolutely attest to the fact that without test scores, colleges can and DO have enough information about an applicant to make an appropriate judgement call. I read admissions applications for several years at George Washington in Washington DC from applicants who applied without test scores. Some of the brightest, most dedicated students, applied without test scores. Not because they couldn't take them (like our current situation with COVID) but rather, because their scores didn't represent their true academic potential. I can tell you the coursework, grades, and activities a prospective student engaged with were the best indicator of their potential on our campus.</p> <p>Are there students who benefit from test scores? Absolutely. But those are also typically the same students who benefit from private tutoring, access to a college counselor, and test prep. But when you're looking to provide opportunities to ALL students, not just students from a select socioeconomic background, removing one of the biggest obstacles is a great place to start.</p> <p>The CollegeBoard is one of the most profitable "non-profits" operating in the education space. The cost associated with testing, and often testing multiple times, is not to be overlooked considering the financial hardships so many American families face. In addition, if colleges require the official SAT score to be sent, that is an added cost PER school the student is applying to.</p>
Sydney	Matthes	For	Rocky Mountain Association for College Admission Counseling	Submitted text	<p>If you choose to vote against HB1067, might I suggest each of you sit for the next official exam and report your scores back to your constituents. I'd love to hear if you think the content and information on the exam proves your ability to be successful in a college classroom.</p>
Nicholas	St John	For	University of Colorado Colorado Springs Student Government Association Senate	Submitted text	<p>UCCS has been ahead of the curve on this issue, and our Student Government Association's Senate has voted to support this bill. We believe, as the representatives of the Student Body at UCCS, that this bill will increase overall college attendance, as well as, strengthen diversity in Colorado's public colleges and universities. We sincerely hope that this bill moves forward in the legislative process.</p>



Dear Legislators,

On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Association for College Admission Counseling (RMACAC), I am writing to request that you support House Bill 1067, which would allow Colorado public colleges to permanently offer a test-optional admissions policy. A significant and growing body of evidence suggests that requiring the SAT or ACT for admission works against the best interest of students and further marginalizes vulnerable, underrepresented populations.

At a time when our country is taking a look in the mirror and confronting systemic racism, we must take into account how the use of these exams in college admissions discriminates against students of color, multilingual students, language learners, first generation college students, and students with disabilities. One of America's foremost historians and leading anti-racist scholars, Ibram X. Kendi, wrote that "standardized tests have become the most effective racist weapon ever devised to objectively degrade Black minds and legally exclude their bodies." Decades of research indicates that success on SAT and ACT exams correlates more strongly with socio-economic status than it does with success in the first year of college or with the likelihood of a student's graduation from college. Additionally, students from higher income families often benefit from expensive private tutoring as well as costly SAT/ACT courses that students of lesser means are not able to access. For these reasons, it is apparent that the continued use of admission tests is incompatible with equity.

In May 2020, the University of California (UC) Board of Regents [unanimously approved](#) the suspension of standardized admission test requirements for all California first-year applicants. Likewise, the UC system will not use test results when making decisions about Regents or Chancellor's scholarships. A coalition of organizations serving low income and minority Californians brought about a [lawsuit](#) against the University of California stating that the tests are discriminatory against certain groups of students. As a result, in September, a California judge issued a preliminary injunction barring University of California campuses from considering SAT or ACT scores in admissions or financial aid decisions.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of colleges and universities had dropped standardized test requirements. Admissions deans across the country realized that test results contributed little to their ability to predict student success, and that the requirement itself served as a barrier to many students. In fact, the high school transcript, which shows the work a student does daily over the course of their secondary school years, is more predictive of how a student will perform in college than test results.

We are also concerned about the burden that Colorado's admission testing requirements place on educators. Often teachers are taxed with drilling students for these exams rather than teaching their curriculum. This is an unfortunate loss of time in which teachers could be delivering a curriculum that engages students and fosters the love of learning. Standardized test drills do not excite students and do not foster the love and desire for lifelong learning. Additionally, since Colorado requires that all students take the SAT, educators are forced to dedicate much of their time organizing and proctoring these exams, when they can be doing many other things that would have a far greater benefit for the wellbeing of our students.

Finally, we encourage you to consider the interests of students as the primary interest in policy discussions about college admission. A recent task force of the National Association for College Admission [posed critical questions](#) about whether the amount of effort, money, and stress placed on our students and their families truly serves the students' educational interests. In our experience, the answer is that these exams have calcified into a barrier and a distraction. As such, we ask that you support HB 1067 to allow Colorado's public colleges to maintain permanent test-optional or test-free admission policies.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Brazinsky
Government Relations Chair
Rocky Mountain Association for College Admissions Counseling

Testimony on HB21-1067

My name is Fabian Laguna, I'm a student at CU Denver and I'm vice president of UCD Student Government. I'm here today to talk about how standardized test requirements have impacted my friends, classmates, and myself personally in hopes that it will help inform the members of this House Education Committee of the impact this legislation can have on the future of our state.

As a student leader I am committed to doing everything in my power to create more access and equity in higher education. Institutions (including CU Denver) are increasingly focusing on equity. Still, systemic inequality exists in every step of the college journey for low-income and first-generation students. These inequities have been unmasked and made more challenging by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The measures in college admission are stacked in favor of students who come from more affluent backgrounds where experiences in higher education is the norm. Standardized tests like the SAT and ACT are expensive. Not only do you need to pay for a test, but in order to really do well you need training materials or a tutor. Having access to the resources that help prepare are a critical factor in determining one's success in taking the exam. There is no reason that a university should require these scores for admission if students are able to demonstrate their eligibility through other means such as extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, school projects or campus interviews. There are many ways for students to show their abilities. A standardized test requirement is as limiting for the student as it is for the university. Why not give both parties more flexibility to determine their compatibility?

This legislation would open the door for universities and impel them to develop new practices in the admissions process that are more equitable. **This is a crucial step for us to take as a state. Not only is it the right thing to do it also makes economic sense.** Our state is changing demographically which means that university demographics are changing too. Universities need to adapt their practices to meet the needs of their customers, just like any business. **Removing standardized tests as a requirement for admissions is an important step the state can take to help universities prepare for the future.** This legislation will give universities the ability to evaluate applicants in new ways that can help illuminate the value that prospective students would bring to the university in a more holistic manner. I am not a first-generation student. Both of my parents have degrees, and my father is a university professor. However, my parents are immigrants, and English is not their first language. I was given many resources to perform well on my ACT, yet I still received a below average score, I think in part due to the fact that the tests are biased.² The economic, racial, and cultural biases in these exams are problematic when it comes to reflecting the true value that an applicant will bring to the university.

¹ <http://pellinstitute.org/indicators/>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2019/12/11/lawsuit-claims-sat-and-act-are-biased-heres-what-research-says/?sh=5e25ea343c42>

I hope that my remarks help shed some light on the importance of the passage of this bill. This past year has shown us that we need to prepare for the future and not be complacent with legacy systems. This bill will give universities the ability to innovate their admissions process, which is imperative in order for them to serve the needs of future applicants. I urge the members of this Committee to vote yes for the passage of HB21-1067. Thank you



A Joint Statement from the Student Governments at the University of Colorado Boulder
As Drafted by the Leeds Student Government Reducing Student Inequities Committee

For Immediate Release
Thursday, March 4, 2021

BOULDER, CO - The student governments at the University of Colorado Boulder strongly support HB 21-1067, a bipartisan bill introduced in the Colorado State Legislature's General Assembly, that would eliminate the requirement to submit national assessment test scores, such as the ACT and SAT, to Colorado's higher education institutions as part of the freshman application process. Together, we further support another bill the Colorado legislature will consider, eliminating legacy status as a consideration for admissions. In support of these efforts, we hope to see higher education become more fair and accessible to underserved students in Colorado. We recognize and applaud chancellor Phillip DiStefano for his Feb 17, 2021 opinion column in the Colorado Sun and agree with many of the points that he brings forth in support of this critical and timely piece of legislation.

This unprecedented year of challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the inequities present in requiring national assessment test scores on college applications. Thanks to the temporary reprieve from requiring test scores for graduating high school seniors this year, CU Boulder's applicant pool was stronger and more diverse than ever, with 24% more BIPOC students applying and this year's freshman class posting some of the highest grade point averages in the past decade despite the current unique learning environment. We recognize the importance and strength of increasing diversity in our student body and applaud these figures while acknowledging that we have much more room for growth as a university. Some families have the resources to spend thousands of dollars on testing preparation books, classes, and private tutors to increase their chance of being admitted into college. However, others are less fortunate and do not have access to these same resources, creating systemic inequity towards those who are less financially privileged. These inequities are made clear in the Colorado Department of Education's 2019 PSAT and SAT Achievement Results, indicating that students who received free and reduced-price lunch scored an average of 153 points lower on the 2019 SAT than their peers. Ultimately, high school academic rigor, grades, involvement, and work experience are much better predictors of higher education success. Moreover, legacy admissions diminish the importance of merit within applications and can put qualified students in unfavorable positions. Those with legacy ties to the University typically have a greater likelihood of possessing resources for success. While legacy admissions are often a small piece of the admissions process, we support equity and fairness to the fullest extent.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated certain systemic inequities within Colorado school districts. Students in underserved and underfunded districts are significantly more likely to have experienced greater hardships academically and financially while transitioning to remote and online learning. Furthermore, the consideration of legacy status in college admissions contributes to inequities and poses a disadvantage towards qualified students from many such districts. The passage of HB 21-1067 and a later bill eliminating legacy status would seek to immediately relieve some of this burden and attempt to level the playing field for students as they apply to all universities within Colorado. Additionally, this bill would directly support actions from Section II of the CU Boulder Inclusion, Diversity, and Excellence in Academics (IDEA) plan by modifying enrollment processes to identify barriers and support a broader range of students.

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Student Government Association

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

A Joint Statement from the Student Government Association at the University of Colorado Denver

Drafted by the CU Denver Legislation and Outreach Committee

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

The Student Government Association (Legislation and Outreach Committee) at the University of Colorado Denver supports HB 21-1067, a bill introduced in the Colorado State Legislature's General Assembly, that would suggest the removal of requirements to submit national assessment test scores, such as the ACT and SAT, as an eligibility criterion for admission. We also support similar legislation to eliminate legacy status as a consideration for higher education admission. We support efforts to create a more equitable admissions process and shift academic admission standards to better support underrepresented students across Colorado and beyond. CU Denver serves underrepresented low-income students who are directly affected by ACT/SAT requirements which disproportionately affects their ability to pursue a higher education pathway. University of Denver, transitioned to a test-optional admissions process, and we hope to see universities in Colorado adopt similar procedures to eliminate admissions requirements that disparage underserved students who wish to pursue higher education. Below are some personal stories from members of our Student Government Association that demonstrate why we find the passage of this legislation to be crucial for creating equitable access to higher education.

Juan Gonzalez: Being a first-generation Hispanic college student, I come from a family from which no one has received education beyond that of the 6th grade. When it came time to plan a post-secondary education route, I could not turn to my family and ask questions about college or the importance of the SAT. Although my school did offer resources for SAT preparation, I had conflicting schedules that made it impossible for me to do so. My family had relied on government benefits into my first year of high school in order to keep a decent way of living, but we were barely getting by. We often found nights where there was no food to cook or moments where our basic needs were not met. I decided to leave behind the life of a child to find two jobs to support my family. Jobs of which I was 15 at the time and now found myself working one job in the morning and another at night. I would leave home at around 3 AM for my first shift, go to school, and go to my second shift that would often end around 10 PM. In high school, I had only ever known late nights trying to get my homework done, leaving me with only four or five hours of sleep per night. When the time came to take the SAT during my Junior year, I knew that I was not prepared to take the exam. I remember leaving the testing room blaming myself for not finding the time to study, ignoring that I never had the time. When the scores rolled out in the months that followed, I remember seeing my SAT score and thinking "my future is over." I allowed myself to believe that the score on my screen reflected my worth, and

intelligence. I was involved in the Advanced Placement Program and the STEM program. Despite having two jobs, I made it possible to qualify for the highest honor roll for four consecutive years. However, I was not the only one in this situation. Many POC students work more than one job to support their families. These are students that excel academically, despite their domestic issues. And it is a trend that these POC students received scores that did not reflect their true intellect, their work ethic, or the struggles of their home life. By eliminating the requirement for students to submit SAT scores, you are allowing the qualities of a student to be determined beyond that of a number.

Yusura Ali: Coming from an underfunded school, I am aware of the inequalities involved with the SAT/ACT. My high school is full of intelligent, talented, hardworking individuals making the most out of the tools they are given. For most of my time in my school, my class had to deal with lack of resources from textbooks to access to technology. Many students would have to type their essays on their phones. Some were lucky to have teachers who let them borrow computers for the weekend. When it came to the SAT/ACT most students did not have access to studying tools. Students who were enrolled and passing their dual enrolled college courses, struggled to score high scores on the SAT. Resources such as Khan Academy were hard for students with no stable internet connection at home to access. Those who were able to access study material quickly learned that the SAT is not about what you know, rather about strategy. Some students who did not like their original SAT scores, most of the time could not pay to retake the test. By eliminating the requirement for students to submit SAT scores, you open doors to diverse talented students, who are willing to work hard for their education.

Olja Kovacevic: As a first-generation college student from a refugee family, I had no idea what an SAT was and why it was necessary, and more importantly why it is so expensive. Working a part time job while attending high school made it extremely difficult to pay for SAT prep resources and take time off to take the SAT. I chose to attend community college after high school while saving money to attend university, but when I chose to apply to CU Denver, I had to submit scores that were from my senior year of high school and did not accurately reflect my aptitude to attend college. I support the bill's recommendation to promote the removal of national assessment test score requirements as an eligibility criterion for admission. In doing so, I believe that universities can promote a more inclusive application process and remove barriers for students who want to pursue higher education pathways.

Issa Villacorta: I believe the SAT and ACT discriminate against minority groups for multiple reasons. Number one these tests costs are out of reach for many students, which affects students from underrepresented populations as they cannot afford it or can only afford to take it once. Second, these tests affect students like me who are immigrants and whose first language is not English making it very difficult to get a good score. These scores do not accurately reflect and measure a student's potential and achievement because I can argue that those students that know more than one language are more advanced than those with English as their native and only language. These issues can deter so many brilliant students from either taking the exam or prevent them from furthering their education. I believe the SAT and the ACT are not equitable as not all demographic groups have access to the same resources that can ensure an excellent score. Students that come from wealthy families are able to afford not only the cost of these tests, but they have access to other

academic resources such as 1:1 tutoring because they can afford it. These students are also able to afford taking the test several times which has been known to increase students' score. Eliminating these tests would provide more access for all students from all backgrounds and economic statuses to higher education. Giving all students **equitable** access to receive higher education would help narrow the disparities that have existed in this country for centuries, giving those at the bottom an equitable **NOT** equal chance at success and opportunity.

Tyler McDaniel: While my experience taking the SAT/ACT was unlike my peers, I wholly support the proposed legislation as I recognize the disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities. I come from a family where the financial resources were available to comfortably take SAT/ACT exams multiple times. While my experience was most certainly privileged, I knew of many high school friends who struggled to pay and study for the exam. Recognizing the disproportionate impacts, the requirements of the costly SAT/ACT exams, I wholly support the proposed legislation.

We hope that the stories highlighted above have brought to light the importance of HB 21 – 1067. This bill would help grant fairer options for students in Colorado who deserve to have every chance at achieving success. It would allow students to not feel limited by a number, and instead feel more confident in themselves and their abilities. Additionally, this bill would give universities more flexibility in their admissions process, allowing them to evaluate candidates in a more holistic manner. We strongly support the passage of HB 21 – 1067 and encourage Members of the Committee to vote in favor of this bill today.

Daniel Casillas
President

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*Legislation and
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Fabian Laguna
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Tyler McDaniel
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COLORADO
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Members of the Colorado General Assembly
State Capitol Building
200 E Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80203

March 15, 2021

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) is writing in full support of [HB21-1067](#), “College Admission Use of National Test Score”.

HB20-1407 allowed Colorado’s public four-year institutions of higher education to make it optional for 2021 high school graduates to submit ACT or SAT scores due to cancelled tests during the beginning of the pandemic. All public four-year institutions did so, and many institutions report that while applications are down for low income, first generation and minority students because of the pandemic, the test-optional policy is allowing them to admit these student populations at higher percentage rates than they were able to last year.

Passionately supported by our state’s public institutions, HB21-1067 will make test-optional a permanent change. We believe a test-optional policy can expand access to deserving Coloradans, maintain the academic rigor of our institutions, and keep Colorado competitive in the higher education marketplace. We applaud the flexibility the bill provides, giving institutions the autonomy to determine the most effective criteria tailored to the applicant’s strengths for making college admissions decisions.

A test-optional policy expands access. While sufficient data does not yet exist regarding the long-term impact of a test optional policy, data shows that national assessment exams like SAT and ACT can create an unneeded barrier to low income, first generation and minority students. [College Board’s \(SAT\) data](#) clearly demonstrates that low income and minority students score much lower than other students. Standardized exams create barriers for students who may perform well four years in the classroom but may not score well on an exam one day of their lives. A test-optional policy provides students the ability to have their academic strengths with their portfolio be reviewed holistically without requiring that test scores be reviewed. While we know “test-optional” will not address all of our equity challenges, we must expand the tools we have to work towards a more equitable Colorado.

The policy can enhance access without compromising academic rigor. National research has demonstrated that high school GPA is a stronger predictor than the SAT or ACT on first-year GPA and college completion. Even further, our institutions’ holistic approach to application review already provides them the ability to evaluate academic and extracurricular accomplishments and life experience within a student’s individual context. As such, our institutions can make informed admissions decisions with or without national assessment test scores. Academic rigor and preparation can still be measured while increasing accessibility.

We believe this bill can support our state institutions by helping them remain competitive in the national higher education marketplace. The number of out-of-state colleges and universities recruiting



in Colorado increases every year, as does the number of Colorado students selecting to enroll in out-of-state institutions. Out-of-state institutions who are test-optional will increase their appeal if our state's institutions are forced to require test scores in admission. Providing every means to assist our institutions after the pandemic must be a priority.

Finally, CCHE believes deeply in the educational ecosystem of our state, including our K-12 colleagues. Our K-12 partnerships are essential to reaching our joint statewide educational goals and in serving our state's students well. As such, it is important to clarify that we believe a test-optional policy can exist in harmony with the federal and state testing required of Colorado's high schools. While the bill will make it optional for students to submit test scores for college admission, high school students should still be encouraged to complete the SAT exam (or whatever accountability measure is utilized by our high schools in the future).

In summary, CCHE is in full support of HB21-1067. We believe a test-optional policy can expand access to deserving Coloradans, maintain the academic rigor of our institutions, and keep Colorado competitive. Test scores can be biased, skewed by social factors such as family income, race/ethnicity and parent's education level. None of these factors should prevent Coloradans from enrolling in our institutions of public higher education. There are no silver bullets in educating our citizens, closing equity gaps and meeting the needs of our workforce. Yet we can and must do all we can to move the needle.

Thank you for your work toward passing HB21-1067.

Respectfully,

The members of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education



Vanecia Kerr, Chair
Denver (Signature on behalf of the Commission)

Sarah Kendall Hughes, Vice Chair
Edwards

Tom McGimpsey
Denver

Berrick Abramson
Lakewood

Charlotte Olena
Denver

Steve Meyer
Grand Junction

Brittany Stich
Denver

Luis Colon
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Steven Trujillo
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Teresa Kostenbauer
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Eric Tucker, Ph.D.
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CC: Dr. Angie Paccione, Executive Director, Department of Higher Education





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Chairwoman Barbara McLachlan
House Education Committee
Colorado General Assembly
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Denver, CO 80203

Dear Chairwoman McLachlan and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to urge your support for the Colorado General Assembly House Bill 21-1067, concerning the use of a national assessment test score as an eligibility criterion for admission to a Colorado Institution of Higher Education. As Superintendent of Aurora Public Schools and former Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education, this bill will help strengthen equitable access to higher education for all Colorado students, by eliminating another barrier to entry.

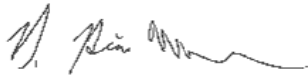
Aurora Public Schools is the fifth largest school district in Colorado, serving nearly 40,000 students, and one of the most diverse, with students from 130 countries and speaking 160 different languages. Since 2015, APS has prioritized ensuring that *Every Student Shapes a Successful Future* by supporting each of our students in developing a plan for their future. We focus on helping our students explore different possible plans, whether that is college and/or career, and then support them in developing the skills and acquiring the credentials to succeed in executing the plan they determine. More than half of APS students pursue higher education immediately after graduating from APS and we anticipate it might be higher if we continue to remove barriers to entry, such as requiring ACT and SAT.

Requiring the SAT or ACT for admission to Colorado's Institutions of Higher is a gate keeper for many APS students. While high school students typically take the SAT once as part of the required State assessments, for many underrepresented students, like those in APS, this will be the only time they take the SAT due to cost and a number of other reasons. Therefore, they will not have the opportunity to improve their scores or combine scores from multiple administrations, putting them at a greater disadvantage than their peers who may have the resources to take the SAT multiple times or ACT as an alternative.

Making the submission of national test scores optional allows students to demonstrate their talents and abilities through a number of different ways, including ways that are more likely to set them up for success in college. As a district, we've emphasized the importance of our students demonstrating their skills and talents through accessing and acquiring credentials that open doors, such as through digital badging; courses that help a student earn college credit such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Concurrent Enrollment courses; internships; and Industry-Based Certificates. As a district we've also expanded the way we identify students for our Gifted and Talented program, looking at other ways to identify students beyond or in place of test scores, such as through portfolios that allow students to demonstrate their talents and skills in more authentic ways. This has allowed us to recognize many of the assets of our students that might not come through test scores and ultimately led to increased representation of multi-language learners and students of color in our Gifted and Talented identification.

In closing, our students, as well as students throughout Colorado, have many talents, all of which are not captured through SAT or ACT scores. Let's not close the door on students because of their SAT or ACT scores, but open the door to other ways for students to demonstrate their preparedness and competencies to succeed at Colorado's Institutions of Higher Education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Rico Munn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

D. Rico Munn
Superintendent