

**Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

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SM26-001

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Marchman,

Senate Committees

SENATE MEMORIAL 26-001

101 **MEMORIALIZING CONGRESS TO END HIGH-STAKES STANDARDIZED**
102 **TESTING MANDATES, RETURN TO EVIDENCE-BASED, HUMANE**
103 **EDUCATION PRACTICES, AND RESTORE LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY**
104 **IN PUBLIC EDUCATION.**

1 WHEREAS, The citizens of Colorado have the highest interest in
2 ensuring a high-quality, equitable, and student-centered public education
3 system that prepares young people for civic life, careers, college, and
4 community well-being; and

5 WHEREAS, Colorado's Constitution affirms that the state's 178
6 school districts are governed by democratically elected local school
7 boards responsible for oversight, accountability, and educational
8 adequacy; and

9 WHEREAS, More than 25 years of state and federal high-stakes
10 standardized testing requirements, beginning with the passage of
11 Colorado Senate Bill 186 in 2000 and the federal "No Child Left Behind
12 Act of 2001", have failed to improve student outcomes or close
13 achievement gaps, and have instead widened disparities correlated with
14 socioeconomic status and access to opportunity; and

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 WHEREAS, High-stakes standardized tests lack accuracy and
2 reliability, have proven bias, rely on questionable scoring practices, and
3 function as weak and inequitable indicators of student learning and school
4 quality; and

5 WHEREAS, High-stakes standardized testing has narrowed the
6 curriculum, reduced instructional time, and displaced creativity, critical
7 thinking, applied learning, and experiential opportunities essential for
8 modern education; and

9 WHEREAS, Students experience heightened anxiety,
10 disengagement, and emotional strain resulting from high-stakes
11 standardized testing pressures, while teachers report burnout, diminished
12 autonomy, and declining retention linked to test-driven evaluation
13 systems; and

14 WHEREAS, Colorado taxpayers spend approximately \$100
15 million each year on high-stakes standardized testing, encompassing
16 vendor contracts, test administration, district and state staffing,
17 technology systems, and compliance logistics, while an estimated 450,000
18 Colorado students subjected to these tests lose an average of 20 hours of
19 classroom instruction each year, resulting in more than 9 million hours of
20 teaching and learning time diverted annually and representing an
21 enormous opportunity cost in foregone reading, math, science, civics,
22 experiential learning, the arts, and mental-health supports, which are
23 investments that improve students' lives and deliver meaningful
24 educational outcomes; and

25 WHEREAS, Evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that smaller
26 class sizes, equitable teacher compensation, modern instructional
27 technology, diverse pathways to career and college, expanded special
28 education services, early-intervention supports for at-risk students,
29 mental-health resources, community school models, and strong
30 family-community partnerships yield significant and measurable
31 improvements in learning, engagement, and long-term outcomes for
32 Colorado students; and

33 WHEREAS, These student-centered investments restore public
34 trust, strengthen local schools, and ensure that resources are directed
35 where they make the greatest difference supporting teachers, reducing
36 stress and disengagement, expanding student learning opportunities, and

1 building a more educated and civically engaged future generation; and

2 WHEREAS, The General Assembly reaffirms the right of parents
3 to opt their children out of high-stakes standardized testing without
4 penalty or adverse consequence, and urges that all education policies
5 respect and protect this established parental decision; and

6 WHEREAS, When the federal "Every Student Succeeds Act"
7 (ESSA) expired after 2021, Congress failed to reauthorize the federal
8 mandate. Colorado seeks full flexibility, including the Innovative
9 Assessment Demonstration Authority, ESSA waivers, and any successor
10 authority, to transition away from statewide high-stakes standardized tests
11 and toward comprehensive performance-based and formative assessment
12 systems; now, therefore,

13 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly*
14 *of the State of Colorado:*

15 That we urge Congress to:

16 (1) End federal high-stakes standardized testing mandates that tie
17 statewide standardized tests to accountability determinations, sanctions,
18 teacher evaluations, or school penalties;

19 (2) Reduce federal reporting and compliance burdens that impose
20 excessive administrative costs without improving learning;

21 (3) Restore state and local authority to design assessment and
22 reporting systems consistent with Colorado's constitutional structure and
23 community priorities;

24 (4) Authorize and expand state flexibility for innovative
25 assessment systems, pilot models, and local accountability frameworks
26 without penalty;

27 (5) Support the reinvestment of public dollars into the programs
28 that research and experience show are most effective, including, but not
29 limited to:

- 30 ● Smaller class sizes;
- 31 ● Teacher salaries that are both adequate and equitable;
- 32 ● Alternative pathways to success, vocational education, and
33 experiential learning;

- 1 ● Special education services, multi-lingual education, and
2 inclusive practices;
- 3 ● Interventions and early supports for at-risk students;
- 4 ● Mental health resources, counselors, and trauma-informed
5 practices; and
- 6 ● Arts, physical education, after-school programs,
7 enrichment, and elective offerings; and

8 (6) Repeal remaining provisions of test-based accountability,
9 eliminate punitive consequences tied to standardized tests, and continue
10 utilizing the National Assessment of Educational Progress as the
11 benchmark for educational comparison.

12 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Memorial be sent to the
13 Majority and Minority Leader of the United States Senate; the Speaker
14 and House Minority Leader of the United States House of
15 Representatives; each member of Colorado's Congressional delegation;
16 each member of the United States Senate Committee on Health,
17 Education, Labor, and Pensions; each member of the United States House
18 Committee on Education and the Workforce; the governor of each state
19 in the United States; and each superintendent in Colorado's 178 school
20 districts and boards of cooperative services.