



**BEACON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

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Beacon City School District
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March 9, 2021

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
478 Russell
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

We are shocked and disappointed that the Biden Administration, even after [the president himself publicly committed to ending high-stakes testing](#), signaled it will ignore pleas from school boards, state departments of education, teachers, and parents to waive all testing mandates under the Every Student Succeeds Act for the 2020-21 school year.

It's obvious to all of us what a struggle the last year has been for children. There is a lot of rhetoric from elected officials about attending to the needs of students, who continue to struggle in the pandemic. Waiving testing this year, when many students have not received any in-person instruction since last March, would demonstrate that this talk is being turned into action. It would give teachers the chance to focus on meaningfully helping their students through the countless challenges they face, instead of preparing them for high-stakes testing.

We are especially concerned that this decision, with such huge ramifications, comes not from a confirmed Secretary of Education, but from an acting Assistant Secretary whose recent resume includes a privately funded organization known to be pro-test.

While we share the concern that many of our students face significant loss of learning, targeted local assessments would be a better tool to identify their individual needs and map a path to improvement. Under the current plan, students must submit to a test that is graded on a bell curve, meaning that half of our students are bound to fail.

Parents have the option to opt out of these tests, which they have done in large numbers for the past several years. Many leaders in education have encouraged parents to do so this year, making it much more likely that any results would not offer a large enough sample size for any useful data. The stakes are high, yet the results will likely be meaningless. The strong probability that these tests won't offer statistically significant measures makes the testing mandate an irresponsible waste of taxpayer dollars — at a time when state and school budgets are already stretched thin.

Please join us in advocating for what is best for our students and teachers. We urge Congress to immediately enact legislation that waives all testing mandates for the 2020-21 school year. This includes grade 3-8 ELA and math assessments, 4th and 8th grade science assessments, any ELA, math and science assessments required at the middle and high school levels, and any ELL assessments.

Sincerely,

Meredith Heuer
President, Board of Education