

Amber Arellano & Sarah Lenhoff

## Education Trust-Midwest Testimony to the Michigan Legislature on State Assessment Options

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Publication date:

February 5, 2014

***Today Amber Arellano, Executive Director, and Sarah Lenhoff, Director of Policy and Research of the Education Trust – Midwest, gave testimony to the Michigan Legislature on Michigan’s state assessment options. Their testimony follows.***

Thank you for giving us the chance to speak to you today about Michigan’s proposed state assessment and assessment options. I am Amber Arellano, the executive director of the Education Trust-Midwest. With me today is Sarah Lenhoff, the Director of Policy and Research at Ed Trust-Midwest. Sarah is one of Michigan’s experts in school accountability.

Ed Trust – Midwest is a non-partisan, data-driven education research, information and advocacy organization that promotes high academic achievement for all Michigan students at all levels, especially low-income students and students of color. We work to be a source of non-partisan information and expertise about Michigan education and gap closing.

Our organization has long been a supporter of college- and career-ready assessments and standards. Michigan’s implementation of the Common Core standards and assessment provide us with an unprecedented foundation on which to transform our public schools’ teaching and learning – and ensure all of our students are college- and career-ready. This is especially urgent as Michigan transitions from an industrial economy to a globally competitive knowledge economy.

Indeed, one of the first efforts Ed Trust-Midwest led in Michigan was a campaign to raise the state’s dreadfully low “cut scores” on our outdated state assessment. State leaders, essentially, had been lying to Michiganders about how well our schools had been serving our students. Our efforts led to the state raising the cut scores in early 2011. With our proposed new state assessment, our families and educators won’t have to worry about that happening again.

We are here today to share our criterion for what research and best practices from around the country tell us are vitally important to have in our new state assessment. Over the last six months, we also asked for input from more than 20 Michigan organizations -- from the business community to K-12 associations to parent organizations -- to inform and guide our criterion.

- **Student Privacy and Public Transparency:** The state assessment must include a high level of security to prevent deception and tampering; a retake option for possible misadministration events; and privacy of student personal information. This is especially important because the results of these assessments will be used to make high-stakes decisions in our school accountability and educator evaluation systems. In order for Michiganders to feel confident that the data from the state assessment is an honest picture of where our students are, test items should be secure and should not be reported back to schools if they will be used in future test administrations.
- **Includes All Students:** An assessment that will provide accurate measures of achievement and growth for students with disabilities and English Language Learners and that has clear, publicly-available policies around accessibility and accommodations for those students.
- **A Tested Assessment:** Any assessment also needs to be pilot tested and should be as transparent as possible, with such publicly available documents as assessment blueprints or specifications that enable a state to know what's covered on the assessments.
- **An 11<sup>th</sup> grade College Entrance Exam, for Equity's Sake:** We also support the inclusion of a college entrance exam in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, with the state paying for this exam.

We also want to caution this honorable legislature about allocating public dollars to be used to support one state assessment for educator evaluations and to measure student performance, and another to measure student growth for school accountability purposes. Such a move would result in unnecessary additional testing time for students, and unnecessary and significant additional costs for the state to bear.

In addition, such a scenario would result in an incoherent, unfair and confusing individual and collective state education accountability framework for principals, teachers and district leaders around the state. The state's planned new assessment will generate reliable, helpful student growth data that will help educators and schools tailor interventions and learning strategies for students, even in their K-3 years. We support the development of this new K-12 data system aligned with the MDE's state assessment plans.

We thank you for your time, and welcome your questions and input.