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BILL: House Bill 1204
TITLE: Education – PARCC Testing – Exemption for Children With Disabilities (Ben’s Rule)
DATE: March 10, 2016
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 1204 exempts a child with a disability from taking a Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment or its equivalent in a public school; makes a specified exception; and defines a specified term.

PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 1204. There are a number of federal statutes and regulations which require all students to be assessed, including those with disabilities. The most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, still mandates the annual assessment requirements. The law requires annual assessments of all students in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school in reading/language arts and mathematics; the law also requires students to be tested in science at least once in grades 3 through 5, 6 through 8, and 9 through 12.

In 2010, our state adopted new, higher standards for student learning in all schools. The Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) will help our schools provide students with relevant, real-world knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in the future.

Maryland has chosen to use the PARCC assessments to meet the annual assessment requirement. The PARCC assessments are aligned with the MCCRS. The PARCC test will help us measure progress toward grade-level mastery as well as graduation. The assessment will help measure students’ mastery of English language arts, literacy, and math.

PARCC is committed to providing all students with access to high-quality assessments. For the assessment system as a whole, PARCC is committed to ensuring that all participating students, including students with disabilities, are able to engage in a meaningful and appropriate manner so valid results can be obtained for all students. PARCC tests provide accommodations that can address many visual, auditory, and physical-access barriers for students with disabilities, while enabling them to take assessments at the same time as others in the class. Through a combination of universal design principles and computer-embedded features, PARCC has designed an assessment system that is inclusive of all students – from initial design through implementation.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** House Bill 1204 and requests an unfavorable committee report.