



BILL: House Bill 461
TITLE: Accountability Program – Assessments (Less Testing, More Learning Act of 2017)
DATE: February 14, 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
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House Bill 461 requires the State Board of Education to adopt regulations limiting the amount of time in the aggregate that may be devoted to federal, State, and locally mandated assessments for each grade to 2% of the specified minimum required annual instructional hours; prohibits time devoted to teacher-selected classroom quizzes and exams, portfolio reviews, or performance assessments from being counted toward the specified testing time limits.

PSSAM **opposes** House Bill 461. This bill strictly limits the amount of time that is devoted on federal, State, and locally mandated assessments for each grade to 2% of the minimum required annual instructional hours. PSSAM strongly disagrees with this arbitrary cap.

The Commission to Review the Use of Assessments and Testing in Maryland Schools released their final report in July 2016. The Commission found that there was no simple answer to the limits on testing. The Commission looked into the various solutions that had been proposed by stakeholders, including across-the-board caps on testing times. The Commission did not recommend caps on testing. The Commission determined that the various recommendations were not realistic and reasonable solutions to the testing issue. As stated in their final report “Had the Commission viewed these as feasible solutions, they would have become recommendations.”

In addition, House Bill 461 requires that each county board develop a social studies assessment that is locally designed and implemented performance-based assessment. PSSAM strongly believes that it is critical that locally-governed education policies and procedures remain under the authority of local boards of education. Each local school board must have the flexibility to develop individual assessment policies and practices that reflect the specific and diverse needs of their system. It also seems to be counter-productive to require additional testing under proposed legislation that is designed to reduce the time spent on assessments.

Finally, House Bill 461 requires that every local school system establish a District Committee on Assessments to monitor and evaluate the county’s assessment program. PSSAM understands the intent of creating these committees. However, House Bill 461’s requirement to establish a District Committee is a duplication of effort. Most larger school systems already have ongoing committees comprised of broad-based stakeholders that are thoughtfully monitoring and evaluating their policies surrounding assessments. Smaller counties have School Improvement Teams (SIT) teams that also address these issues. Again, PSSAM strongly believes that local school systems should continue to maintain control on these issues. A one-size fits all mandate is not in the best interest of local students, educators, and the public-at-large.

For the reasons stated above, PSSAM **OPPOSES** House Bill 461.