

Maryland General Assembly Passes Legislation to Limit Testing in Schools

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Annapolis, Maryland – Today, the Maryland Senate unanimously approved the More Learning, Less Testing Act (SB452) by a 47-0 bipartisan vote, after the House of Delegates approved the widely-supported bill 139-0 last Thursday. The legislation limits mandated testing to 2.2% of the school year—or 23.8 hours in elementary and middle schools and 25.7 hours in high schools—except in eighth grade, when the limit is at 2.3% or 24.8 hours.

“Educators applaud legislative leaders in both parties for coming together to establish a commonsense safeguard against over-testing in our schools,” said Betty Weller, president of the Maryland State Education Association. “This means our kids will have more time to learn important well-rounded skills, and our teachers can get back to why they went into the profession in the first place: inspiring their students to love learning.”

The legislation now goes to Gov. Hogan’s desk for his signature, although the governor has not yet committed publicly to signing the bipartisan bill. Last Wednesday, he vetoed legislation to reduce the overbearing influence of test scores in measuring school success, siding against the Maryland PTA, educators, and civil rights groups. The veto was quickly overridden by the General Assembly on Thursday.

“Between the More Learning, Less Testing Act and the Protect Our Schools Act, the legislature has put Maryland schools in a position to show that our children are more than a test score,” said Weller. “The overemphasis on testing has failed to close achievement gaps for the last two decades. It’s not enough to know that some students perform worse than others—we need to know why. Now Maryland is a national leader in refocusing time and resources on the kind of learning opportunities that truly help kids thrive in school.”

According to Maryland State Department of Education data from last school year, students in 14 Maryland school districts took 30 hours or more of standardized testing. The average Maryland student takes more than 200 standardized tests during their time in school, taking away 250 hours from instruction. The More Learning, Less Testing Act would significantly reduce this over-testing by eliminating 730 hours of standardized testing across 17 districts each year.

The legislation establishes District Committees on Assessments, bringing educators, parents, and other local stakeholders to the table to consider which district-mandated tests to keep, shorten, or eliminate. It also changes the state-mandated middle and high school social studies test into a performance-based assessment—an innovative, hands-on way of measuring student success beyond the traditional standardized test.

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