

Madam Chair and Committee Members, my name is Dave Heistad. I am the Executive Director for Research, Evaluation and Assessment in Bloomington Public Schools. I am here to testify in favor of House File 3106 regarding the establishment of a standardized assessment task force.

I am pleased that the purpose of the committee is to recommend changes to the current assessment system to make assessments more meaningful, reliable, and useful for schools, students and families.

In my 25 years as an assessment expert in Minneapolis Public School and now for the last 8 years in Bloomington Public Schools, I have helped develop local district assessments that are aligned to specific purposes. Some assessments are specifically designed to inform instruction at the classroom level; some assessment are diagnostic to help remediate specific academic difficulties; and some assessments are used for accountability at the School Board level. Each assessment must meet nationally recognized standards for their designed purpose. I am always glad to serve as a technical advisor to MDE for the purpose of creating or revising State assessments to be valid and useful and are interpreted correctly.

It is very important that teachers, students and parents are involved in the process of providing feedback on current assessments and how they can be improved. In the past three years opt-outs for state math tests have increased 44%. It appears that students are less motivated to do well on state tests, a factor that may be related to the decline in math test scores over the past 4 years. The task force, as proposed in this bill, should discuss this issue along with the alignment of tests to new content standards, bias review of all new tests, and accurate, timely, and useful reporting of results. I believe this task force will provide value-added to our fine education system here in Minnesota.