

August 6, 2014

The Hon. Teresa Paiva Weed
Senate President
State House
Providence, RI 02903

BY FAX AND MAIL

The Hon. Nicholas Mattiello
Speaker of the House
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Speaker Mattiello and President Paiva Weed:

An article in today's *Providence Journal* quotes RI Board of Education Chair Eva-Marie Mancuso as citing RIDE data that only one student benefitted from the "high stakes testing" moratorium bill that passed at the end of the session. In doing so, she suggests that passage of the law was unnecessary (or worse), and that its impact was negligible. Since she expressed interest in informing the General Assembly about the law's impact from the Board's perspective, our organizations thought it worth making you aware of it from our less defensive posture.

For purposes of this letter, we will leave aside the fact that the Board of Education's reference to only one student directly benefitting from the law is clearly incorrect. (An open records request filed by Rhode Island Legal Services last month indicates that at least three other students were given diplomas in direct response to the law.)

Rather, we simply want to emphasize, as you are both aware, that the effect of the moratorium law goes far beyond the handful of students who received diplomas at the last minute because of the overturning of the ill-conceived NECAP requirement. The law achieves, and was always designed to achieve, many other important goals. For instance, it has the tremendously beneficial impact of eliminating the charade that school districts had to go through this year of handing out more than 1,000 supposedly "extremely rare" waivers in order to bypass the NECAP mandate. The elimination of the hypocrisy surrounding this requirement – in which RIDE constantly came up with more and more exceptions to the rule in order to avoid the mandate's real consequences – would alone be reason enough to extol the virtues of the new law.

But perhaps its most important impact is in ensuring that, at least for the next three years, teachers won't have to waste hours and hours of classroom time teaching to an irrelevant test, and students won't be dragged out of real classwork in order to spend pointless hours cramming for a meaningless standardized test. Nor will

students or parents have to needlessly fret and deal with the anxiety that high stakes testing inevitably, and depressingly, generates.

Even as the Board of Education continues to bemoan passage of the law, we note that the Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association recently passed a resolution expressing support for a moratorium on high stakes testing, an implicit endorsement of the General Assembly's wisdom in enacting the statute (enclosed).

We remain grateful for the General Assembly's action in passing this important law. The Board of Education's continued recalcitrance in accepting it only highlights why it was so necessary.

Thank you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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