

Letter to Colorado Department of Education & Commissioner Dr. Katy Anthes

July 17, 2020

Advocates for Public Education Policy, a statewide coalition of individuals and grassroots organizations, strongly objects to a recent request by a group of education “reform” organizations that millions of CARES Act dollars be spent on a statewide “back-to-school” standardized test to measure the knowledge Colorado’s K-12 students have gained, retained, or lost during the period that schools were closed due to the pandemic. It is our position that any money received by the CARES Act be spent in the classrooms and not toward private testing vendors.

We agree that teachers need to know the academic standing of their students to develop effective instructional plans as they return to school. Yet, districts have their own formative assessments, which are more meaningful and useful than a standardized test.

At a time when society cries out for critical thinkers and problem solvers, using a “back-to-school” standardized test to assess our students is a step backward for today’s challenges. CARES Act funds could be used to support the innovation taking place in classrooms throughout the state to develop evaluation tools which are more relevant and informative than a standardized test.

Let us not forget, students’ lives have been traumatized and disrupted by the pandemic. Assessing the social and emotional needs of our students will be just as critical as assessing their academic needs. CARES Act funds should be used for additional resources to take care of the whole child, especially for our economically disadvantaged students.

Advocates for Public Education Policy opposes using CARES Act funds for the purchase of a statewide “back-to-school” standardized test. We request that the CARES Act funds be used for supporting the unique needs of students in each school district and that those needs be determined by local education leaders.

The pandemic has presented an opportunity for change. ***The task of creating learning environments that address the needs of the whole student can be accomplished by principals and educators using relevant and meaningful assessment tools to develop authentic instructional planning.*** Statewide “back-to-school” standardized testing does not meet this task.

Submitted by the board of Advocates for Public Education Policy:

Dr. Jo Ann Fujioka

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Hon. Sue Marinelli

Sen. Michael Merrifield,

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