

January 19, 2021

Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee
North Dakota Senate
State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 5805-0360

Dear Chairman Schaible and Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on Senate Bill 2141.

If passed, Senate Bill 2141 would cause certain students to be administered an alternate “equivalent nationally recognized standardized test” in grade 11, in place of the ACT or WorkKeys.

Empirical Data

While the ACT is not the sole standardized test used as a college entrance examination:

- The ACT is the only nationally recognized college entrance exam that has empirically-derived college and career readiness benchmarks.
- The ACT is the only college entrance exam that provides a science score based on an actual science test. This ACT science score measures the skills college science instructors regard as critical for success in college level courses.
- The ACT is the only test to provide a predictive STEM score, which policy planners may aggregate and use to measure progress toward North Dakota STEM Network’s goal to change and grow the state economy.
- The ACT is the only college entrance exam that has maintained a consistent score scale for decades, one that is recognized and valued by North Dakota students, parents, educators and postsecondary institutions.

In an ever-changing country, the ACT is a constant in student life and in student success: The consistency of North Dakota utilizing the ACT with all students has provided educators and policymakers with stable and reliable longitudinal data for many years, for all students and for specified subgroups of students. This consistency allows for clear and direct comparison among North Dakota districts and between the 17 other states that provide all public-school students with the ACT.

Workforce Success

The ACT is the only college entrance exam that provides an interest inventory to identify personally relevant career (educational and occupational) options, and predicts a student’s success on WorkKeys assessments. The career readiness indicator is significant because success on WorkKeys assessments allows students to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), which *Site Selection Magazine* identifies as one-third of the components that make up its workforce development rankings.

Not only do over 26,900 employers in the United States recognize the NCRC as a credential that certifies an applicant's ability to succeed, a 2018 study shows a correlation between NCRCs and higher wages. The NCRC that is earned from successful performance on the WorkKeys assessments stands alone as a nationally portable credential of foundational skills that leads to job attainment and higher rates of income security.

The stakes for students are high; the practical application an exam has on a student's future must be prioritized in any decision about assessments. Perhaps this is why North Dakota identified only the ACT and WorkKeys as the qualifying assessments for both the North Dakota Academic Scholarship and the Career and Technical Education Scholarship.

With the unprecedented challenges meeting the North Dakota students who are the class of 2020, 2021, and 2022 through 2029, the importance of ensuring that every child has a clear path to a successful college and career is clear. ACT helps educators create this path by providing a holistic and empirically based framework of college and career readiness to help ensure North Dakota students are prepared to achieve their dreams of education and career success after high school.

Please Vote No to SB 2141

For the aforementioned reasons, I write with strong concern about the unintended consequence of SB 2141 if enacted, which is to introduce the option of substitute examinations without regard for the advantages that North Dakota's students will forfeit as a result. For this reason, I ask that you vote "No" on SB 2141.

Respectfully,

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Director

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