

April 3, 2014

Congressman Chris Gibson
1708 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gibson,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan organization that advocates directly to make children a priority in policy and budget decisions, I'm writing to express our support for the Student Testing Improvement and Accountability Act (H.R.4172), and to thank you for introducing this important legislation to reduce the number of standardized tests students are required to take.

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, students, teachers, and schools have become unnecessarily overburdened by the exponential growth of standardized testing. This over-testing has a number of significant negative effects on children and their schools, including lost learning time; increased student stress; reduced content knowledge; narrowed curriculum that excludes subjects that are not tested such as foreign languages and the arts; and the diversion of resources that could be better spent on student supports, tests that better measure student knowledge and critical thinking, or improving instruction. Annual standardized tests are an unnecessary burden as well; no other country tests their students every year from grades 3-8, instead opting to test students only a few times throughout their academic careers. One test per grade span will still give teachers the ability to identify student growth and improve practice while returning to a testing schedule that does not subject students to the negative effects of standardized tests every year. Furthermore, students, parents, and teachers have begun to understand these negative effects, and widespread resistance to standardized testing has been growing across the country.

H.R.4172 offers a common sense solution to the over-use of standardized testing. It amends No Child Left Behind so states are required to offer a standardized test only once every grade span (grades 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12) instead of every year from grades 3-8. This is a return to research-based practice that was in place before the 2001 passage of No Child Left Behind and is a significant step toward federal education policy that puts children's learning and development first.

Thank you for your work on this important piece of legislation, we look forward to working with you on this bill. If you have any further questions please contact Kevin Lindsey, Senior Director, Education Policy, at KevinL@firstfocus.net.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President