



# STATE OF MINNESOTA

## Office of Governor Mark Dayton

116 Veterans Service Building ♦ 20 West 12th Street ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 5, 2015

The Honorable Sondra Erickson  
Minnesota House of Representative  
Room 479, State Office Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

The Honorable Charles W. Wiger  
Minnesota Senate  
Room 205, State Capitol  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Representative Erickson and Senator Wiger:

In my 2014 State of the State address, I spoke of the heavy toll excessive standardized testing is taking on Minnesota classrooms. The disproportionate amount of time and test preparation that has resulted from the federal No Child Left Behind law and additional state requirements has stifled teachers' creativity and ability to impart information to students.

Last spring, I directed Commissioner of Education Brenda Cassellius to convene a test reduction working group to examine the number of tests required by state and federal law, as well as those required by local districts, and to make recommendations about which ones could be streamlined, combined, or eliminated. Those recommendations were provided to me and the Legislature in early February, and included suggestions to slightly reduce the number of tests at the high school level.

While I am grateful to the members of the working group for their time and thoughtful deliberation, in my estimation, the recommendations did not go far enough. Therefore, I have included in my policy bill a proposal to significantly reduce the number of standardized tests students are required to take during the course of their K-12 education. The proposal—which would cut the number of tests by one-third—would scale back the overwhelming volume of high-stakes tests in our schools, while maintaining the state's ability to track individual student and school performance over time.

My approach does not require abandoning testing outright, and preserves our ability to monitor how students are progressing from year to year. Further, it represents a reasonable approach to making testing more efficient and effective, so that teachers can better prepare our children for a competitive global marketplace in which creativity, innovation and imagination will be valuable commodities necessary for students to succeed. As we all know, there are federal requirements around testing. If the federal education law does not change, I will direct the commissioner to request an amendment to our waiver from No Child Left Behind that will allow us to make these changes.

Rep. Erickson and Senator Wiger

March 4, 2015

Page 2

While my policy bill contains what I believe to be a responsible approach to reduced testing, I realize you may have additional ideas as well. I welcome your additional thoughts and stand ready to work with you to develop a testing regimen that will better serve students, parents, teachers, and schools in the coming school years.

My best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Dayton". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mark Dayton  
Governor