

NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
ASSOCIATION

CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN



Hon. Christopher Sununu
Governor, State of New Hampshire
State House
107 North Main St.
Concord, NH 03301

March 25, 2020

RE: Timely action in coordination with the New Hampshire Department of Education on statewide assessment waivers under ESSA

Dear Governor Sununu,

During these unprecedented and challenging times, the professional associations who support teaching and learning across New Hampshire's schools (NHSAA, NHSBA, NHASP, NHASEA, NH-CTE, and NEA-NH) have been meeting frequently to assess and coordinate supports for students, educators, and families. We are concerned that the NH Department of Education has not deferred the annual statewide assessment.

We call on you, as the Governor of the State of New Hampshire, to require the NH Department of Education to respond to the US Department of Education's invitation to file a waiver for the administration of the statewide assessment. Doing so would defer the statewide assessment in grades 3-8 and 11 until next year and would not require families to administer this assessment as part of their remote learning plans.

At this time, it is our understanding that the NH Department of Education is seeking to negotiate with testing vendors, including the possibility of an assessment that would be administered at the student's home. The modified assessment would be administered outside of the accountability system, and we have concerns over the validity and reliability of any results that may come of them:

● **Concerns Over Access and Equity:**

- The NH Department of Education cannot ensure that all students have equal access to assessment materials, including but not limited to broadband and internet access; devices and software required for the potential assessment; and / or a printer, ink, and other material for a potential paper assessment.
- The NH Department of Education cannot ensure that districts have the resources, training, and supports necessary to support homeless and transient students; other states have started to see hotels and shelters

closing to help stop the spread of the virus. This disproportionately affects students and families who are experiencing homelessness, even without adding a requirement to administer an assessment.

- **Concerns for Students with Disabilities:**

- The NH Department of Education cannot ensure that students with disabilities receive the essential and required supports, as outlined in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and required by federal law, in order to complete the assessment. This may include -- but is certainly not limited to -- support from a paraprofessional, alternate modes of access (including auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual), access to assistive devices or special equipment, the conditions of the assessment setting, or other accommodations.

- **Concerns for the Impact on Families:**

- The NH Department of Education cannot ensure that the responsibility to administer the assessment will not negatively affect families. Because of the health crisis, families are currently facing job loss, financial hardships, and/or working from home while supporting their child. To ask families to also administer an assessment will result in additional stress on families and students in a time that is already overwhelming.

- **Concerns for Emerging Bi- and Multilingual Students**

- The NH Department of Education cannot ensure that students who are classified as English Language Learners -- those who are emerging bi- and multilingual learners -- have an appropriate assessment, similar to what occurs in a typical state assessment. When annual assessments are administered at school, many ELL students have an alternative assessment, which is not published by the same testing vendor. Additionally, multilingual students who take the standard assessment may have specific accommodations, including having the math portion read to them, which may not be possible in an assessment administered at home.

Our state education agency, teachers, and students should be spending their time connecting, collaborating, and caring for one another during this health crisis. Our focus should be on providing guidance and direction to support schools, to ensure that families feel equipped for remote learning and that children are receiving meals in these uncertain times. Assessment and negotiation with vendors should be secondary to all else we do.

At this time, we have a responsibility to ensure our students and families are thriving the best they can despite these circumstances. Care, concern, predictability, routine, and the cultivation of meaningful connections should be our focus while students are at home and families are supporting their learning.

Our associations have a deep desire to work together, creating welcoming and safe opportunities for students and teachers to remain connected. This commitment to collaboration and coordination extends outside of our associations to your office and the state education agency.

Thank you for the outstanding work you are during this state of emergency. We look forward to continuing to work with you as we navigate these uncharted waters.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carl M. Ladd
Executive Director, NHSAA



Barrett Christina, Esq.
Executive Director, NHSBA



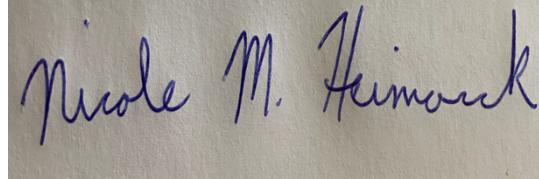
Bridey Bellemare
Executive Director, NHASP



Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu
Executive Director, NHASEA



Megan Tuttle
President, NEA-NH



Nicole Heimark
Executive Director, CTE-NH