

## **Bill Sponsor Speech - Iza McGawley SDSC (2016)**

Our bill aims to eliminate the use of SAT and ACT scores in the public college or university admissions process. The goal of this bill would be to take a first step to an equitable education. We want schools to see a student for their actions and academic abilities, not as a number. Standardized testing leads to a society with a predominantly white and higher class population of educated citizens, stress, anxiety, and self confidence issues for high school students, test as opposed to subject based curriculum in schools, and gives higher incentive to conform to one way of learning as opposed to being a creative, passionate, critical thinker.

**Higher education is not something that belongs to the higher class.** It is a necessity for all citizens. Princeton University conducted a study to understand the effect that the SAT and ACT had on their diversity. According to this study, removal of the need for standardized testing has the intended effect of increasing the diversity of race and economic class. Let's face it, wealthier students can afford better tutors, homes in areas with better schools, better studying material, and often receive more academic support in general. If Latino and African American students are unequally affected by poverty, then it makes sense that diversity would rise with this bill. In addition, white students and students with English as a first language have the advantage of cultural relevance. This may lead some to the assumption that white, higher class students are more qualified and likely to become a successful college student, but it was shown that in a pool of 125,000 students from 33 different colleges that grades, regardless of SAT and ACT scores were a much more solid identifier of success. In this same pool, students who chose not to show their test scores (often the first in their families to go to college, non-white, female or Pell Grant recipients) compared with those who did show their test scores, had only a 0.005% difference in GPA and 0.006% difference for graduation rates.

So no, this bill will not compromise the system, it will only press schools to look at a students as individuals, for what they do *as well* as their academic capability instead of their test score.

Something that every modern high schooler can relate to is the stress, anxiety, and self confidence issues that are caused by our unfair means of measuring one's eligibility to receive a college education. The SAT forces teachers to move their curriculum toward test taking skills and the memorization of facts that will inevitably be forgotten within a matter of days. Why do we send kids to school? To prepare them for life, spark a passion for a subject they hope to pursue in the form of a career, teach them how to be problem solvers and critical thinkers, or to have them prepare for a test that even **the President of The University of California calls, "coachable, biased, and a poor predictor of college performance"?** Personally, I think the education that we all deserve, one of deep learning and investigation of our true passions, is being sacrificed for one that devotes itself to the preparation for an exam. Not every individual learns the same way and life will never ask you to make decisions in a multiple choice format. We write our own stories and unfortunately those stories cannot be classified on a 1600 point system. Equitable education is empowering, our current system is not.

**I yield my time to the chair.**

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### **Summation Speech**

In review, our bill aims to eliminate the use of SAT and ACT scores in the public college or university admissions process. By doing this, we would be eliminating racial, language, and socioeconomic barriers to higher education and beginning the removal of test-based vs. subject based teaching.

The SAT and ACT have been studied by educators and colleges and the outcomes have shown that the intended purpose of these tests are not true to what actually is happening. **As I mentioned before, the President of The University of California calls it, "coachable,**

**biased, and a poor predictor of college performance”** If the SAT is not an indicator of college performance, then what is? Grades and classes show a student’s ability to understand material and process it well enough to complete their given work on time. On the SAT, the test is purposely worded to throw students off, is multiple choice, and is something that students have to take a class on to be able to hone the skills needed to perform well. In other words, it is not reflective of the understanding of a subject. Some may consider the SAT a way to “level the playing field”, but if students cannot afford an SAT class or tutor to, as the Stanford Daily puts it “learn the tricks”, then this does nothing more than demolish the *economic* playing field by giving an unfair advantage to wealthier students. This is proven in College Board’s (Organization that makes SAT) and the National Center for Fair and Open Testing’s data. But this goes past economic barriers. What if a student would rather spend their time doing other things? Like join extracurriculars or help support their family. What if teachers would rather focus on their subject rather than specific test taking skills? Our way of measuring success is not measuring success at all, in fact it limits us by making meaningful learning a second priority.

Another common claim about the SAT is that it is a way for colleges to easily and quickly make admissions decisions in an ever-growing population of applicants. To that, I say three things: 1) Hiring additional admissions staff is necessary with or without this bill. 2) If the SAT has been proven time and time again to not be an accurate representation of success, it is not an accurate tool for this purpose. And finally 3) With many factors such as grades, extracurriculars, personal essays, letters of recommendation, etc. there is no lacking of ways to differentiate students. If it is really much of an issue, it is a weak and easily fixable argument behind the countless others that counter it.

Once again we come to the conclusion that your race, socioeconomic status, form of learning, and final test score should not determine your entire life. These issues are talked

about immensely in modern politics, but where are the efforts to identify a single concrete step that would lead to a resolution of this dilemma. The SAT tells a person whether or not they will get into a good college or University, an education at a good college or university leads to the opportunity of getting a career with a comfortable salary, and a career with a comfortable salary ensures that a person will have a place in society that will have a meaningful effect on their surrounding community. An educated world is a world with less poverty and crime and an overall more equal and enriched population. By removing the requirement of these tests, individuals will have to show the world what they are made of through action. This bill is a stepping stone on the path to an empowering and equitable education. So, shall we take the first step to a state of creative and passionate thinkers, or shall we continue on the current path “because that’s how it’s always been”?

Race often plays into this in a major way as we see schools and support systems in Latino or African American communities slipping between the cracks. According to The Atlantic, “In about half of the largest 100 cities [in the US], most African American and Latino students attend schools where at least 75 percent of all students qualify as poor or low-income under federal guidelines.” In our own predominantly Latino community, we are only having about 40% of high school students going to a college or 4 year university. This is something that is talked about immensely in modern politics, but where are the efforts to identify a single concrete step that would lead to a resolution of this dilemma. Many people of color are first generation college students. The cycle of high school-dropout to low paying job to children having to go through the same situation, does not align with the “American Dream”. It may be cliché, but education really is the first step to a sustainable equality between races. Access to education brings society up, enriches citizens, reduces crime, and most of all gives individuals the chance to achieve their dreams.

### Data and Quotes

- The difference in grades between submitters and non-submitters is **five one-hundredths of a grade-point-average point**.
- The difference is **six-tenths of 1 percent in graduation rates**.
- About **30 percent** of students who enroll at these colleges did not submit test scores.
- Students who do not submit test scores are more likely than those who do to be the first in their families to go to college, non-white, female or Pell Grant recipients.
  - William C. Hiss, Bates College (Study based on Test-Optional)

“The study -- involving **123,000 students at 33 colleges and universities** of varying types...those students with low high school grades but high test scores generally receive low college grades, while those with high grades in high school, but low test scores, generally receive high grades in college.”

- Inside Higher Ed

“Anyone involved in education should be concerned about how overemphasis on the SAT is distorting educational priorities and practices, how the test is perceived by many as unfair, and how it can have a devastating impact on the self-esteem and aspirations of young students.”

- President of UC schools, Richard Atkinson

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