



To Members of the Senate Education Committee:

As mothers of children in Denver Public Schools ages 6-15 years old, and as leaders with Together Colorado, a nonpartisan, multi-racial, and multi-faith state-wide organization that develops community leaders and provides them with tools to make positive change, we want you to know that we **oppose SB 16-005, Eliminating 9th Grade Testing, and ask you to oppose it too.**

We are writing to you in order to defend the education of our children and, in particular, the education of minority and low-income kids attending underperforming schools. Did you know that in 2014 only 44% of minority students in Colorado were reading at grade level in the third grade compared to 86% of their Caucasian peers? Studies show that if students are not reading at grade level in the third grade, they are four times less likely to graduate on time than students who are on grade level, and are far more likely to enter the school to prison pipeline. Knowing these facts, one way to ensure that our students are on track to graduate and to be successful post-high school is to have them take the state test in 9th grade. The information we gather from the 9th grade tests can help teachers, students and parents determine how best to support students in their high school years. However, in order to have good data that can drive a positive change, we need students to take the tests.

In conclusion, we don't support removing state exams or opting out of them because we believe we need an accountability system that allows us to know the academic level of our children especially in English Language Arts and Math. We want to make sure our children will graduate high school, ready to attend college; however, if there is no ninth grade state test to provide us with a measure of where are children are at when they enter high school, how can we be sure our children will graduate high school ready for college or a career?

We urge you to vote NO on SB 16-005.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maribel Banueols, Juaquina Garcia, Nancy Paz and Yesenia Quintana