

Thank you Chairman and members of the committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify. My name is Dani Backer - I am the social studies consulting teacher for the Boise School District. I am here to testify against House Concurrent Resolution Number 14.

First, let me say, that I can appreciate the love of Idaho and its history that was put forth when creating HCR14. I was a fourth grade teacher for several years, where we have the honor of teaching Idaho History and I understand the pride that Idahoans have for this beautiful state.

Having said that - I find many issues related to adding Idaho History questions to the State Civics Exam that directly affect students and teachers. Summative assessments, like the Civics Exam, are cumulative evaluations used to measure student growth after instruction. Idaho History is taught for an entire year in fourth grade and students are assessed on Idaho History during their fourth grade year. As it currently stands, 6-12 grade State Social Studies Standards do not support this addition to the exam as the State Social Studies Standards passed through the Idaho Legislature and State Board of Education do not include Idaho History content except during second semester US government class which is too late for a high stakes graduation requirement.

In the Boise School District we give the Civics Exam during the first semester of student's senior year as the current civics exam content most closely aligns with our US Government course. If Idaho History content were to be added to the exam then students will be tested on content that they received 8 years prior. With the ever increasing transient nature of our schools we might be assessing students who did not attend Idaho schools in fourth grade and have never received instruction in Idaho History. (lines 22-24)

There is also the additional issue of the loss of instructional time. Teachers will be compelled to review Idaho History content - losing valuable instructional time in their content area. Currently, the loss of instructional time in response to the multiple-choice Civics Exam has already had a significant impact on our students learning. Adding additional non-content driven test questions is not the way to accomplish the goal of increasing Idaho civic knowledge, skills, and values among our students.

The cost of the Civics Exam falls fully on school districts. The proposed changes to the Civics Exam will add to costs already established at the district level through personnel hours, tracking and communication with grading programs. In the Boise School District we have personnel who have spent countless hours pulling grade data, meeting with technology specialists and supporting teachers to administer the exam. Although the state does not directly incur a cost from the exam - districts are feeling the financial effects.

What seems like a simple addition to the Civics Exam has far reaching implications for our students and teachers. Please reject HCR 14. Thank you Chairman and members of the committee for considering my testimony. I am happy to stand for questions.