

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5193

As Passed Senate, March 6, 2025

Title: An act relating to supporting remote testing options for students enrolled in online school programs.

Brief Description: Supporting remote testing options for students enrolled in online school programs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Cortes, Chapman, Krishnadasan, Liias, Nobles, Salomon, Shewmake and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/15/25, 1/30/25 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/6/25, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows school districts with online programs to provide students within those programs the ability to complete statewide assessments remotely beginning in the 2027-28 school year.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop, review, or update assessment administration and security policies to support remote testing options by April 1, 2027.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5193 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice Chair, Early Learning; Harris, Ranking Member; Cortes, Dozier, Hansen, Krishnadasan and McCune.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Elena Becker (786-7493)

Background: Statewide Assessments. State and federal law requires that Washington students regularly take statewide tests to assess their learning growth and the progress of the educational system. This includes include English language arts and math tests administered in the 3rd through 8th and 10th grades, and science exams administered in the 5th, 8th, and 11th grades.

Online Learning. State law requires that each school district has its own online learning policy and practice, which dictates if and how it provides online learning opportunities. According to guidance from OSPI, when students enroll in online courses, the district serving the student remains responsible for administering the student's state assessments.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: School districts with online programs may provide all students within those programs the ability to complete statewide assessments remotely beginning in the 2027-28 school year.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must develop, review, or update, as appropriate, assessment administration and security policies to support remote testing options by April 1, 2027. At a minimum, these policies must address:

- required qualifications for testing personnel;
- maximum ratio of students to proctors;
- requirements for remote testing environments, including monitoring procedures and restrictions on access to devices and persons;
- device and network requirements; and
- parental consent and agreement forms.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Online learning programs expanded under COVID-19 and have been very popular. Remote testing is being done in many other states including California and Oregon, who also use the Smarter Balanced Assessment testing. Testing in an unfamiliar location adds to anxiety and may inhibit student performance. Families in remote or rural areas may need to travel long distances, take time off work, find childcare, or stay overnight in a hotel.

Remote programs currently rent locations across the state for assessments. These locations

may not be large enough or adequate for students and are expensive to procure. Some of these rented locations lack water fountains. Traveling to in-person testing sites can be particularly difficult for students with disabilities. Blind students have access to personalized computer equipment at home. This equipment puts those students in charge of their learning, but is difficult to pack and transport to testing sites.

These statewide assessments are mandatory, as opposed to other optional assessments like the SAT. It would be great to see this expanded to include remote and hybrid learners in any learning environment.

OTHER: Appreciate the intent to open access to assessments and create more comprehensive data. An amendment to extend the implementation timeline in order to pilot, ensure compliance with federal requirements, and work with vendors to access appropriate testing platforms would be helpful. Clarity is needed on whether this extends to all assessments, including science, Smarter Balanced Assessments, and others. A minor fiscal note for staffing the pilot is expected.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Adrian Cortes, Prime Sponsor; Felicia Kern, Digital Public Schools Alliance; Carolyn Logue, Stride/K12; Caitlin Modine, Insight School of Washington; Matthew Kesler, River HomeLink; Jamie Anderson, parent.

OTHER: Becky Wallace, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.