

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 19, 2016

Director Meagan Karvonen
Dynamic Learning Maps
112 West Campus Road
430 Joseph R. Pearson Hall
Lawrence, KS 66045

Dear Director Karvonen:

We write with great concern about the recently announced pricing structure for alternative assessments that provide students with the most significant cognitive disabilities an opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Annual assessments exist to give students, educators, parents, and the community one measure of student learning, and price should not be a barrier to this resource. While we are dismayed about the overall cost increase for the consortium, we are extremely concerned that this cost is being disproportionately borne by small states like Vermont.

In August, Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) presented and ratified a new pricing scheme that alters how the test is priced. Currently, states share the burden in a flat test fee of \$39 per test. An equitable approach to absorbing the high 115 percent per test increase could have been adopted allowing the cost to be \$84 per test for each state regardless of a state's size. Instead, DLM chose to institute a high flat fee for all states regardless of size, and an additional per test fee on top of the flat fee. This scenario unfairly privileges large states and disadvantages smaller states.

Under this scheme, small states like Vermont will be hit the hardest. For example, this change will increase the per test costs from \$39 to an estimated \$459 per test – an over 1000 percent price hike. Meanwhile, large states like New York will see a much smaller proportional increase of just 67 percent. According to the State of Vermont, this means that smaller states, like Vermont, will be left with hundreds of thousands of dollars in fewer resources to spend on education.

At a time when state and local budgets are very constrained, it is fiscally unattainable to allocate scarce resources to this inexplicable price increase on tests. Furthermore, our communities should not be forced to make an impossible choice between securing a high-quality test and providing more support to students. This is not just unacceptable; it also punishes students living in small states. What is even more troubling is that this increase will have the greatest impact on

students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, one of the nation's most vulnerable populations.

We appreciate that DLM recently decided to reconsider this pricing structure. As DLM discusses this new pathway forward, we ask that the process be open and transparent; that leading education officials in each state be given every opportunity to participate; that a concerted effort be made to ensure all consortium members participate; that all pricing scenarios presented for consideration be equitable to all states involved; and that the actual cost for DLM to produce or update these assessments be presented.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding the process and dates for considering the pricing of these tests, as well as the equitable pricing options you are considering. Given the importance of this matter to our communities, we request a response by September 30, 2016.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress