Co-Chairs Leonie Haimson and Rachael Strickland,

Thanks very much for your questions regarding Smarter Balanced scoring. Although Oregon was approached by our test delivery vendor (American Institutes for Research) to gauge interest in pursuing AI (Artificial Intelligence) scoring of constructed response items on the Smarter Balance assessments, Oregon made the decision NOT to employ this scoring option at this time.

All constructed response items—items that require students to show their work or create an answer to an open-ended prompt—are scored using human raters who have been trained and have qualified to score that specific item. These items are scored at least once by a human, with a percentage being scored again by a second human rater in order to monitor scoring accuracy and consistency. The vendor who is contracted to recruit, hire, train, and supervise the raters for Oregon's Smarter Balanced assessments is Measurement Incorporated (MI). This company maintains strict protocols as part of their contract to complete the work. Oregon is currently working with MI to provide an opportunity for Oregon teachers to engage in these hand scoring activities.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Derek Brown, whom I have copied above, our Assistant Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, at 503-947-5841 (derek.brown@state.or.us).

Sincerely,

Salam

Salam A. Noor, Ph.D.

Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction | Oregon Department of Education

Public Service Building, 255 Capitol St NE 2nd Floor, Salem, OR 97310
Phone 503.947.5740 | Fax 503.378.5156 | ✉salam.noor@state.or.us | www.ode.state.or.us

April 5, 2016

Dear Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor:

As parents and advocates, we have many outstanding concerns about the administration and scoring of the PARCC and SBAC Common Core exams this spring. There are several unresolved questions the answers to which have not been publicly revealed. The original PARCC contract called for two thirds of the students to have their ELA exams, including written responses, entirely scored by computers this spring, with only 10 percent of them re-checked by humans.

Similarly, according to the SBAC contract, 100 percent of students' written responses would be scored by computers, with only half re-checked by a human being.

This is despite the fact that many experts have cited the inability of computers to assess the creativity and critical thought that the Common Core standards were supposed to demand and these exams to assess, no less distinguish nonsense from coherent narrative and reasoning. In each case, however, states had the option of having the exams entirely hand-scored for an additional charge.

So we demand that you answer the following questions:

1-   What percentage of the ELA exams in our state are being scored by machines this year, and how many of these exams will then be re-scored by a human being?

2-   What happens if the machine score varies significantly from the score given by the human being?

3-   Will parents have the opportunity to learn whether their children's ELA exam was scored by a human being or a machine?

4-   Will you provide the "proof of concept" or efficacy studies promised months ago by Pearson in the case of PARCC, and AIR in the case of SBAC, and cited in the contracts as attesting to the validity and reliability of the machine-scoring method being used?

5-   Will you provide any independent research that provides evidence of the reliability of this method, and preferably studies published in peer-reviewed journals?

Attached an issue brief showing the lack of evidence for machine-scoring, which can also be read here: http://tinyurl.com/jvfztnm.

We look forward to your prompt reply,

Leonie Haimson and Rachael Stickland, Co-Chairs, Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

Julie Woestehoff, Executive Director, Parents Across America and Wyoming parent advocate

Carol Burris, Executive Director, Network for Public Education

Monty Neill, Executive Director, FairTest

Save Our Schools New Jersey

Parents Across Rhode Island

Lee P. Barrios, M.Ed., NBCT, Louisiana Friends of Public Education

Cheri Kiesecker, CO parent, privacy advocate and blogger, Missouri Education Watchdog

Cassie Creswell, More Than A Score, Chicago IL

Dawn Collins, board member, East Baton Rouge (LA) school board

Stephanie Zimmerman, Idahoans For Local Education Wendy Katten, Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education

Michelle Fine, Lynn Fedele, C. McGoey , R. Tuma & E.Halberstadt , Montclair Cares About Schools [NJ]

Arthur Freitas and Kayla Kirkpatrick, M.Ed., Colorado parents

Sheila Resseger, retired teacher from the RI School for the Deaf

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