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Student Drug Testing Talking Points

Drug testing is ineffective, counterproductive, expensive, and invasive

- Drug testing is not effective in deterring drug use by young people. The largest study ever conducted on the topic looked at 94,000 students at 900 schools and found no difference between levels of drug use at schools that drug test their students and those that don't.
- Drug testing students who wish to participate in extracurriculars deters at-risk students from joining the activities in the first place. School officials should welcome these students into the positive supervised learning environments provided by after-school programs, which are a proven means of helping students stay out of trouble with drugs.
- Drug testing is very expensive, taking away scarce dollars from more effective programs that actually keep young people away from drugs and out of trouble.
- Drug testing can undermine relationships of trust between students and teachers and between parents and their children.
- Drug testing is invasive. During urine testing, school officials generally stand outside bathroom stalls listening for the sounds of urination to ensure validity of the tests. In the event of positive or inconclusive results, students are asked to reveal any prescription medications they are taking.
- Due to unreliable accuracy rates, drug testing can result in false positives, leading to the punishment of innocent students.
- Drug testing can lead to unintended consequences, such as students using drugs that are more dangerous but less detectable by tests, such as meth, cocaine, inhalants, or ecstasy.
- Random drug testing treats students as if they are guilty until proven innocent and sends mixed messages about civics and constitutional rights.
- Drug testing exposes schools to tremendous legal liability and expensive litigation.
- Organizations opposing random drug testing students who participate in after-school activities include the National Education Association, the Association for Addiction Professionals, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of Social Workers, and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence.
- Most educators reject random student drug testing as a prevention tool. 95 percent of American schools do not randomly drug test their student athletes, and only two percent of schools randomly test students who participate in extracurriculars other than athletics.
- Instead of wasting money on drug testing students, Congress should help school officials provide effective drug education programs that actually help young people make responsible lifestyle choices and keep them safe.