Statement by Student

I am a sophomore at a public high school in California. I plan to apply to UC schools for college, and I believe that due to the way that UC currently uses the SAT and ACT in admissions, I will not be fairly considered for admissions.

I have a history of disabilities including severe anxiety that have affected my test performance. However, I am a good student, and so far in high school, I have a 4.0 GPA. I also take one of the most rigorous course loads offered to me at my age at my high school.

Since seventh grade, I have had a 504 Plan that allows me certain school accommodations. These include the use of extended time on exams, the ability to take all exams in a distraction-reduced setting, and preferential seating in class. I am also able to leave class and take a break when necessary. I had always planned to seek test accommodations on the SAT or ACT prior to taking one of these exams. However, my high school and school district changed their policies this year. Now, my high school will no longer apply for SAT or ACT accommodations for any of its students. My counselor said that the accommodations process has become too burdensome and time-consuming for the counseling department. My high school has also eliminated the ability to use certain test accommodations at school even if some kids need them.

I know my standardized tests cannot truly predict my ability to succeed college. These tests will be even less of a prediction of my college success if I am unable to obtain the accommodations I need. However, my grades and the rigor of my courses over four years will be able to demonstrate my ability to succeed at a UC school.

I know that many other students do not know anything about the accommodations process, and some do not even know that they need to be diagnosed with disabilities yet. Others know what they need, but they do not have access to the resources to obtain a disabilities evaluation or a counselor who can help them with the process. There are so many students with disabilities who are not accurately represented by their test scores in the admissions process.

There is also a stigma associated with using test accommodations, even if someone legitimately needs them. Among kids my age and their parents, this is often considered “cheating” and is looked down upon, even for kids who really need accommodations. This has become much worse since the Varsity Blues scandal. Students like me have to weigh using accommodations against the embarrassment and suspicion we will face if anyone finds out.

I am participating in this action so that students like me do not have to be judged in the admissions process based upon exams that do not accurately measure their abilities, and so that students like me do not have to suffer the stigma and embarrassment if we need to request test accommodations for our legitimate disabilities. I am also participating, because I know that most students are not like me and will not be able to apply for accommodations at all because of different barriers they face.