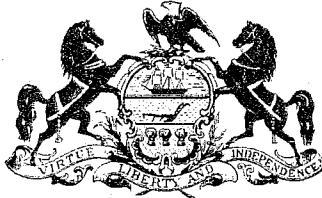


2520

PAUL W. SEMMEL, MEMBER
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HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2020
PHONE: (717) 787-3017
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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES:

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DESIGNATIONS:

- PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY COUNCIL

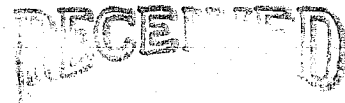
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127 QUARRY ROAD
KUTZTOWN, PA 19530

April 3, 2006



APR 05 2006

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Honorable Gerlad L. Zahorchak
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Dr. Zahorchak:

I write regarding the proposed changes to Chapter 339 (Vocational Education) of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. I am deeply concerned that imposing a 360 hour requirement for reimbursement for vocational agricultural education will have an adverse impact on these programs in Pennsylvania high schools, which serve as an important venue for agriculture education in our Commonwealth. What is more, we are concerned that the Department is promulgating a regulation that deals with eligibility for state funding, an action properly within the purview of the General Assembly.

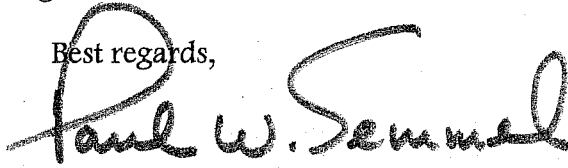
As you know, there are nearly as many vocational agriculture education programs being taught in a comprehensive high school setting as there are in career and technical centers. It will be extremely difficult for the 41,000 students enrolled in these courses in a comprehensive high school setting to meet a 360 hour requirement, particularly if they are enrolled in college preparation courses.

Imposing this requirement would contradict many of the goals the General Assembly has set forth for agriculture programs over the past several years. The General Assembly has consistently approved legislation to encourage our young people to pursue agriculture as a career. We mention this to highlight the importance with which agriculture, and the education of our youth about agriculture, is viewed in Pennsylvania. Establishing a 360 hour requirement for schools to receive reimbursement for agricultural education programs will have the affect of eliminating the vast majority of these programs from our high schools. Obviously, this would be contrary to the goal of encouraging young Pennsylvanians to pursue agriculture as a career.

In addition to my concerns about the policy underlying this proposed regulation, we are equally concerned about the forum proposed for its review. While we acknowledge that the regulatory process is the appropriate place to discuss curriculum and other education policy matters, it is not the forum for dialogues about schools' eligibility for state funding. That responsibility lies with the General Assembly and should be part of the annual conversations surrounding the General Appropriations Act and the legislation required to implement it.

I thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns regarding the Department's proposed revisions to Chapter 339 and would strongly encourage that you take them into consideration prior to promulgating this regulation in final form.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul W. Semmel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "P".

PAUL W. SEMMEL
State Representative
187th Legislative District

FWS/bmg



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
333 MARKET STREET
HARRISBURG, PA 17126-0333
www.pde.state.pa.us

May 25, 2006

The Honorable Paul W. Semmel
House of Representatives
House Box 202020
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020

Dear Representative Semmel:

Secretary Zahorchak has asked me to respond to your March 22, 2006 correspondence, relaying the comments of your House Education Committee colleagues concerning our proposal for Chapter 339. I apologize for the delay in responding.

The Department appreciates the feedback we have received on Chapter 339. The views of legislators, policy leaders and members of the vocational education community are essential to crafting a proposal that raises standards for our vocational education students and provides technical education centers with the capacity and flexibility they need to plan high quality programs. We are in the process of summarizing and addressing the various comments and suggested changes we have received. I look forward to updating you in the near future on our proposed revisions.

Meanwhile, feel free to contact me at 783-6867 with any questions or concerns. Thanks again for your interest in the Department's efforts to improve delivery of vocational education statewide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee Burket".

Lee Burket, Ed.D.
Director
Bureau of Career & Technical Education

