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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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Intergovernmental Affairs Committee

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April 1, 2008

Karl Girton, Chair
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Mr. Girton:

We want to thank you and your staff for the modifications and changes to Chapter 339 Vocational Standards in general, and as they relate to agriculture education programs in particular.

We believe these modifications and changes to Chapter 339 will provide school districts needed flexibility to make adjustments in time, scheduling and course selection so that students will have a better opportunity to meet all program requirements.

In addition, we appreciate the Department's reconsideration in retaining provisions related to supervised occupational experiences which as you know are a critical component of the career and technical education program and educational experience.

The March 25, 2008 Comment and Response Document indicates that those concerned that the 360 hour requirement would lead to the closure of programs is not valid. We respectfully disagree. Several districts have closed their Agriculture Education programs and more than a dozen others have indicated that they will close.

The Comment and Response Document also indicated the Department has worked with the Pennsylvania Association of Agriculture Educators to identify those academic courses related to the agriculture CIP codes for inclusion as part of the approved agriculture program and count towards meeting the minimum time requirements. In that regard, we are concerned that sufficient language does not exist in the School Code or this final version of Chapter 339 to sustain these changes into the future.

We urge and expect the Department to address this issue in a subsequent amendment to this Chapter or join us in support of a change in the School Code so that these visionary changes are clearly stated in law or regulation.

Our career and technical education community and more importantly our students need clarity and predictability in planning their career paths if they are to succeed.

We look forward to your support in addressing our concern.

Sincerely,

James R. Roebuck, Majority Chairman
House Education Committee

Jess Stairs, Minority Chairman
House Education Committee

cc: James Buckheit, Executive Director-State Board of Education

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