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From: kcustren@thearcblair.org
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2009 11:00 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: Oppose Keystone Exam Regulations

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Kathy Custren
431 Jackson Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602-6419

September 30, 2009

Arthur Coccodrilli
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Coccodrilli:

Dear IRRC:

I am writing to oppose approval of the so-called "Keystone Exam" regulations. These regulations will be harmful to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. • The regulations allow students with IEPs to be exempted from having to pass the exams. Schools would be less accountable to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their parents. It is likely that less attention would be paid by teachers to students who do not have to take and pass the tests.

• The regulations are unclear about whether alternative tests would be available to students with IEPs for all 10 exams. • The regulations are not specific with respect to whether students with disabilities could utilize reasonable accommodations - accommodations that they may utilize in their everyday school work. Would these accommodations be allowed during the testing process? • The price tag for these exams has been estimated between \$208 and \$240 million dollars. Special education received a 0% increase in state spending this year. The money for "Keystone Exams" would be better utilized to study and modify the current PSSA and PASA testing system and/or improve the special education system to provide the support needed by students with disabilities so they can be included in regular classes in their neighborhood school, which would help them succeed in both school and adult life after special education.

Please take these regulations off the fast track. Instead, vote them down. Slow down and investigate how these tests have impacted students with disabilities in other states who have similar regulations. Invest in educational programming that will support students with disabilities, including remedial supports, curriculum modification and teacher supports, before approving a new testing system that could adversely impact students with disabilities.

Pennsylvania's department of education is in the midst of revising its testing process since results indicate students with disabilities and testing accommodations consistently rank below grade level on its standardized tests. There is certainly measurable progress and achievement for these students; but to require a particular standard in order to receive a

diploma is not only prohibitive to students with disabilities, but serves to counter the intent and spirit behind country's current education laws.

Thank you,

Kathy Custren
814-946-1011