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From: George Lammay [glammay@bentworth.k12.pa.us]
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2009 10:35 AM
To: IRRC
Cc: Charles Baker
Subject: Comment of graduation competency exams
Attachments: IRRC.doc; ATT5616298.txt

Please accept the attached comments as my stated concern regarding the proposed graduation competency exams.

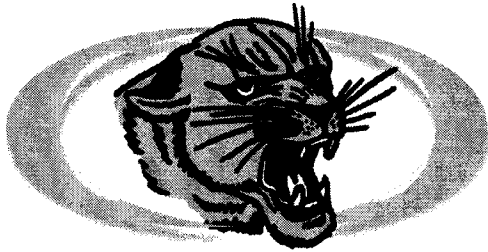
Thank you.

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION



BENTWORTH HIGH SCHOOL

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

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Members of the Independent Regulatory Review Commission:

I continue to stand in opposition to the proposed graduation competency exams. My public testimony previously objected to the advancement of this proposal for many reasons. While the proposal has been amended several times since the original form, many of my objections are still valid.

The overall concept proposed does not fit well with the pattern and practice of public schools today. Requiring the graduation competency exam to be included as one third of a student's grade will lead to a number of concerns. If the exam is administered as the current PSSA exams are, special education students will not have the accommodations they normally receive available to them. Thus, the grade for their coursework will be adversely affected. How can the Department of Education not understand how impractical if not illegal this concept is? Timing of the exams and scoring will lead to difficulties in regard to graduation of students. These are just two examples of issues that would arise.

The revised proposals make mention of the test being optional. I have found that there when this type of testing is made optional, there is always a backdoor way to hold the school accountable. These tests are not optional. The school district cannot risk not participating. To think that the test is optional is naïve at best.

Finally, I must say in all honesty that the graduation competency exam proposal has been such a politicized process with little support from the great majority of teachers and administrators. The example I would raise is the public hearing I attended. I provided testimony along with several superintendents, a fellow principal, a technology consultant and the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Yes, your eyes did not deceive you, Mr. Rooney testified. Mr. Rooney indicated that he had been asked to testify by Governor Rendell. I fail to see the value of the owner of a professional sports franchise testifying at a public hearing regarding testing. I do see that this process was clearly politicized from the beginning. I find very few of my colleagues in support of this proposal, yet it lives on at the insistence of the Governor and the Secretary of Education.

This proposal needs to be stopped and stopped now. If there is a desire to study the issue further to gain consensus, I would not object to further discussion. If this proposal is approved, there are far reaching consequences coming and I believe most will be negative.

Respectfully submitted,

George Lammay
Bentworth High School Principal