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From: Harry Mathias [hmathias@centralcolumbia.k12.pa.us]
Sent: Friday, October 16, 2009 12:54 PM
To: IRRC
Subject: Title 22 Chapter Four input
Attachments: IRRC Testimony 101609.pdf; Joint letter 09-07-29_1.pdf; IRRC cover letter 101609.pdf

Hello,

Please see the attached documents regarding the proposed Chapter Four regulations to Title 22.

Thank you,

Harry Mathias, Superintendent
Central Columbia School District

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION



CENTRAL COLUMBIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

4777 OLD BERWICK ROAD
BLOOMSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17815-3515

October 16, 2009

Independent Regulator Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

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Dear Honorable IRRC Commissioners:

I have served in public education for 25 years—10 as a mathematics teacher, six as a Curriculum Coordinator, and nine as superintendent—I have worked with numerous school districts and intermediate units in developing local assessment systems under the current Chapter Four Regulations. In addition, I serve with business and industry leaders on the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board.

I wish to express my support for the proposed graduation requirements.

The academic standards movement has improved the clarity and quality of curriculum for all Pennsylvania public school students. That quality, that rigorous and relevant education, should be reflected in the attainment of a meaningful high school diploma. I believe that the proposed graduation requirements will serve as a valid and reliable measure for graduation level attainment of the core academic standards.

A quality assessment system provides multiple opportunities for students to show mastery (or in this case, proficiency). The current proposal does so. By providing opportunities to show proficiency through the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams, a valid and reliable local assessment, through Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, through course-based competency examinations, or through Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals, the current proposal provides all students with numerous options.

A quality assessment system considers the needs of those students identified as “special needs”. The current proposal does so. Providing for the attainment of graduation requirements through the IEP goals addresses the unique learning needs of a large population of students.

A quality assessment system should provide local teachers and school leaders the opportunity to provide locally-developed, valid and reliable assessments as alternatives to the PSSA. The current proposal does so.

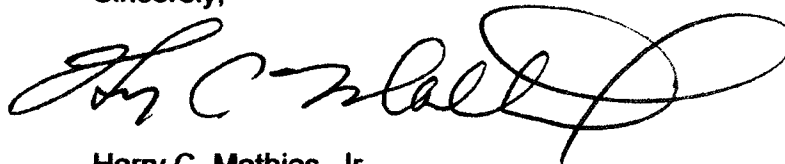
A quality assessment system should be linked directly to the curriculum and instruction provided daily in classrooms. The current proposal, through the inclusion of Keystone assessments, and with the development of model curricula, does so.

Finally, I believe that the state regulations should reinforce a culture of academic attainment and importance. The high school diploma should be based on defined, measurable and observable academic performance to reinforce a culture of academic importance. The current proposal provides for that important intangible.

Providing students the motivator of connecting the diploma to performance is a good thing. Providing students with numerous methods and opportunities to show their academic ability is a very good thing.

In conclusion, I offer my support for the proposed graduation requirements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry C. Mathias, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Harry C. Mathias, Jr.
Superintendent

A JOINT LETTER FROM PENNSYLVANIA SUPERINTENDENTS ON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

July 29, 2009

Dear Honorable Members of the General Assembly:

We are superintendents of school districts large and small, rural, suburban and urban from across the commonwealth. Our high schools are as diverse as the commonwealth itself, ranging in size from thousands of students across dozens of schools, to a few dozen students in a single building. As school leaders, we face unique challenges, but share enthusiasm for the state's continued and growing financial support of our districts. This support requires that we show the taxpayers across this state that additional resources and high achievement go hand in hand.

We have reviewed the compromise reached by the State Board of Education to establish a menu of high school graduation requirements. This plan will:

- **Reduce the testing burden on students.** The proposal will ultimately eliminate 18 hours of PSSA testing in reading, writing, math and science.
- **Save taxpayers money.** This plan will cost \$40 million less than the Administration's original proposal over the next six years.
- **Expand the options to earn a diploma,** including rigorous local assessments, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, or successful completion of secondary level coursework and a standard final exam.

We believe the options are reasonable and achievable. More importantly, we believe stronger graduation requirements are tools that can help us accelerate our progress, document our gains, and ensure success for every graduate. While this letter came together in just the past few days, we know many of our colleagues are similarly encouraged by the progress on this issue. We commend every state legislator who made an effort to learn about the challenges we face in educating our students; we especially thank those who were directly engaged with districts, organizations, and the State Board in an effort to craft this compromise. We are ready for the challenge that meeting these graduation requirements will present.

We urge you to continue the momentum represented by this compromise and move quickly to review and comment on the regulations that will put this needed element of educational reform in place.

Sincerely,

Dennis Murray
Altoona Area School District

Glenn Thompson
Bedford Area School District

Lawrence Korchnak
Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Brian Toth
Bellwood-Antis School District

Wayne Brookhart
Berwick Area School District

Donald Thomas
Blacklick Valley School District

Vincent DiLeo
Central Cambria School District

Harry Mathias
Central Columbia School District

Joseph Padasak
Chambersburg Area School District

Gregory Thornton
Chester-Upland School District

David Goodin
Connellsville Area School District

James Barker
Erie City School District

David Wishard
Galeton Area School District

Barbara Parkins
Greater Johnstown School District

Gerald Kohn
Harrisburg City School District

Marianne Bartley
Lebanon School District

James Budzilek
Leechburg Area School District

James Kraky
Lehigh Area School District

Mark DiRocco
Lewisburg Area School District

Barry Tomasetti
Mifflinburg Area School District

William Clark
Milton Area School District

Joseph Brady
Minersville Area School District

Timothy Bowers
Northern Tioga School District

Francis Barnes
Palisades School District

Arlene Ackerman
School District of Philadelphia

Mark Roosevelt
Pittsburgh School District

Thomas Chapman
Reading School District

Thomas McInroy
Shanksville-Stonycreek School District

David Pastrick
Somerset Area School District

Deborah Wortham
Steelton-Highspire School District

William Miller
Tyrone Area School District

Rick Huffman
Windber Area School District

Sharon Miller
York City School District



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Dear Honorable IRRC Commissioners:

For nearly two years, I have been a strong supporter of the need for more consistent and rigorous high school graduation requirements. While many superintendents from my region have also been longstanding supporters of the State Board's efforts, I am especially heartened by the emerging consensus among my peers from across the state. The attached letter – which was transmitted to the General Assembly just after the announcement of the latest proposal – documents that superintendents from districts large and small, urban and rural, recognize the need for reform.

Also attached is writing testimony that I would like submitted into the public record on this matter.

The debate around this issue has been a long and challenging one. But high school reform is perhaps the most potent tool at our disposal to ensure successful futures for our students and for Pennsylvania. I urge you to support the final-form Chapter 4 regulations on October 22nd.

Please call with questions.

Sincerely,

Harry C. Mathias, Jr.
Superintendent

Attachments