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Pennsylvania Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.

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October 15, 2009

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

Subject: Academic Standards and Assessment (Keystone Exams) IRRC #2696

Dear Mr. Coccodrilli:

On behalf of over 80,000 members of the Pennsylvania PTA, we write to you today about the proposed Keystone Exams.

Here are our concerns:

- The Keystone Exam will be worth 33% of a final year grade. Students scoring below basic will receive no points on the exam. The possible result for some students is that they might have an 85% average for the course, score below basic on the final and receive a grade of 57% $((85+85+0)/3=57)$ and fail the course. The students will have to retake the test or the modules they failed. The Pennsylvania PTA is against high-stakes testing.
- Although the use of the Keystone Exam is voluntary, it seems very clear to us that most school districts will not have the money or the staffing to develop their own tests. In other words, they will be forced to use the Keystone Exams.
- We worry that these high stakes tests will be detrimental for our special education students. It really is not very clear exactly how an alternate measure of proficiency would work for these students.
- And finally, we have real concerns for the unintended consequences of the Keystone Exams. This is a huge change for education in Pennsylvania. We believe that there was not enough opportunity for input by all stakeholders, including parents and students, in crafting this proposal.

In conclusion, we applaud efforts to increase academic achievement in Pennsylvania's students. However, until the above listed concerns are addressed, the Pennsylvania PTA can not support this version of the Keystone Exams.

Sincerely,

Michèle Morrow
Michèle Morrow
President, Pennsylvania PTA

Caroline Allen
Caroline Allen
Immediate Past-president, Pennsylvania PTA

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY REVIEW COMMISSION

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FAX

TO:	Independent Regulatory Review Commission	From:	Mary Hess, PA PTA
Fax:	717-783-2664	Date:	October 16, 2009
Re:	Academic Standards & Assessment (Keystone Exams) IRRC #2696	Pages:	2 pages, including cover page