

**COAL**

2696

**Bradford Energy Company, Inc.**

P.O. BOX 342  
BIGLER, PA 16825-0342

PHONE: (814) 857-7681  
FAX: (814) 857-5003  
mjr@bradfordenergy.com

*E. Allan Walker*

President and  
Chief Executive Officer

August 4, 2009

Senator Jeffrey E. Piccola  
Senate Box 203015  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3015

RECEIVED  
2009 OCT 20 AM 10:02  
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
ENERGY COMMISSION

Dear Senator Piccola:

I want to thank you for taking a stand to help high school students and businesses in Pennsylvania by voting for Senate Resolution 156, which urges the state Education Department to develop regulations to implement the Keystone Exams.

These exams will be meaningful, end-of-course reviews to make certain our high school students have the knowledge and skills they need in key subjects, such as English, math, science and social studies, before they graduate from high school. Students who do not pass these tests will receive appropriately crafted remedial help while still in high school.

The Keystone Exam compromise also preserves local school district control by allowing districts to come up with their own tests, as long as these are approved by a local-state committee, and to use project-based assessments as other states have successfully done, for those students who can demonstrate mastery of a subject but have difficulty with a written exam.

The most important issue, though, is that implementation of the Keystone Exams will mean Pennsylvania will have in place statewide, rigorous assessments to ensure its high school graduates are ready for college or the 21<sup>st</sup> century work place.

Now, with Pennsylvania's 500 school districts using assessment methods which range greatly in rigor and in what they measure, far too many students receive diplomas without being ready to move on. Recent studies have shown two of five high school graduates failed to achieve proficiency on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade PSSA exams, and one in three graduates must take remedial courses when enrolling at our State System of Higher Education universities and state community colleges.

Senator Jeffrey E. Piccola

Page 2

August 5, 2009

A recent poll of Pennsylvania businesses finds only seven percent of company leaders have a great deal of confidence high school graduates have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in today's competitive economy. Eighty percent of these business people support the Keystone Exam concept, and two-thirds say they see entry level job applicants who are not qualified for the positions for which they are applying.

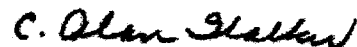
I can offer anecdotal evidence from my own company of the problems unprepared high school graduates bring to our business's efficiency, but the time for talk is past.

What we need now is action, and your recent committee vote is a concrete step toward getting that action. We need to keep the momentum going forward on this issue. Please affirm your backing for these needed exams by supporting Senate Resolution 156 when it comes before the full Senate for a floor vote.

While the recession is causing major budget troubles in Harrisburg, I also encourage you to support funding for these exams. Eight million dollars is required in the first year to get started implementing this process. While every dollar of tax money spent should always be scrutinized, especially in these tough economic times, I encourage you to realize this 8 million dollars will be an investment in our state's economic future that will repay us all many times over through better qualified graduates and better quality employees in the years to come.

As one who has done business in Pennsylvania for decades, and as a long time supporter of our public school system, I believe we have a moral obligation to continually update that system to provide the best education possible for our young people. Your continuing support for Senate Resolution 156 and the Keystone Exams will show you share this belief, and will mark you as a leader for Pennsylvania's education and economic future.

Sincerely,



C. Alan Walker  
President & CEO  
Bradford Energy Company, Inc.

CAW/mjr