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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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October 19, 2009

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

Dear IRRC:

The Arc of Philadelphia, which advocates for people with disabilities and their families in Philadelphia, opposes the "Keystone Exam" regulations. These regulations will be harmful to students with disabilities and harmful to the entire education system. First, there are numerous uncertainties with the proposal, such as whether alternative tests would be available. Would there be reasonable accommodations available to student with disabilities, and what would those accommodations include? Since students who score below basic on an exam will earn 0%, and with the exam counting for 1/3 of final grades, how will this effect the ability for students to graduate with a diploma? Will these exams cause more students with disabilities to drop out, as they already do at a disproportionately large rate, or will students graduate more often with certificates of attendance and with little ability to live independently the rest of their lives as the repercussion? When students with IEPs are exempted from testing, will schools have less accountability for students with disabilities and more motivation to over identify students as in need of IEPs?

And, the question of costs cannot be ignored when our state is willing to pay \$208 to \$240 million dollars for exams, in another year when special education received a 0% increase in state spending, for duplicate exams that continue the negative trend of relying too heavily on standardized test. The money for "Keystone Exams" would be better utilized to study and modify the current PSSA and PASA testing system, which leaves so many students caught in between the PSSA and PASA, so that their true abilities are never discovered. Alternatively, use the funds to improve the special education system to provide the supports, services, interventions and expertise needed so students with disabilities can succeed.

We urge you to vote down the proposed regulations. Invest in educational programming that will support students with disabilities, including remedial supports, curriculum modification and teacher supports, high-quality, non cookie-cutter Transition programming, adequate Extended School Year services, and practices and materials that develop a real continuum of services in all schools. Do not approve a new testing system that would adversely impact students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

J. Bruce Hulick
Executive Director

The Arc of Philadelphia is affiliated with The Arc of Pennsylvania, The Arc of The United States and other local chapters throughout the state.