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From: Kathy Demshuk [KATHYD@WINNER-INTL.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2009 10:13 AM
To: IRRC
Subject: Keystone Exam

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2009 OCT 20 AM 10:13

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear IRRC,

As a business owner in Pennsylvania I am very concerned with the current state of affairs as relates to high school graduates. We know that 40% of all Pennsylvania graduates can't pass an 11th grade assessment of at least one core subject. That results in too many applicants for employment at our companies not being ready to go to work. Too many require remediation which is expensive for the employer and time consuming for both of us. Employers want to know an applicant holding a Pennsylvania high school diploma meets a certain threshold of basic knowledge and a basic skill set. We're not getting that now.

80% of business leaders in the Commonwealth support a test as Keystone Exams to make sure graduates are ready - ready to work, ready to compete, ready to succeed. We can't continue to drop this ball. It's unfair to the students and employers. It is affecting all of us negatively.

There is a compromise on the table that address as many of the previous concerns. It is not an all or nothing test and opportunities to retake the test are addressed. There is still "local" consideration and flexibility given to school districts. I'm encouraging you, on behalf of Pennsylvania business to implement these exams.

Sincerely,
Karen Winner, CEO
Winner International LLC
Sharon, PA