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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Chairman, Education Committee
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PA Higher Education Assistance Agency, Member
Board of Directors

PA Historical and Museum Commission
Black History Advisory Committee, Member

PA Legislative Black Caucus, Member

October 13, 2009

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

The Honorable Arthur Coccodrilli, Chairman
Independent regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Chairman Coccodrilli:

I would like to take this opportunity as Chairman of the House Education Committee to comment on final form regulation #6-312 – Academic Standards and Assessment – submitted by the State Board of Education.

As I noted in the attached letter to State Board of Education Chairman Joe Torsella, “I believe that the compromise embodied in the final form Chapter 4 regulations promotes greater accountability of students meeting academic standards while preserving local control for school districts in determining high school graduation for their students.”

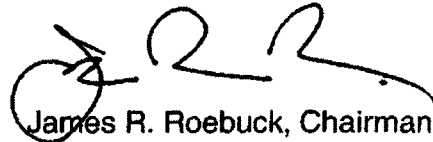
Based on discussions that have occurred since the Board approved final form regulations, however, I do have two concerns about the final form regulations that should be addressed by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education as part of its promulgation of these regulations.

First, that the development of new model curriculum and diagnostic tools contained in the regulation should be extended to elementary education starting in the first grade so that our children who need remedial assistance can receive it at an earlier age reducing the need for later remediation. While we certainly need to ensure that all students graduating from high school have earned a high school diploma that certifies that they are career and college ready, we should not wait until high school to provide the curriculum, diagnostic tools and remediation needed for students to succeed in school. The fact that a significant portion of our high school students drop out of high school should tell us that we need to start earlier in addressing student academic shortcomings before they even reach high school.

Second, since the Keystone Exams if used by school districts shall constitute

33% of a student's course grade with below basic performance by a student being scored as a zero, the Department of Education in its development of performance level descriptors and performance level cut scores for the Keystone Exams should recognize and be sensitive to the consequences of how a zero score will affect a student's grade in that course and their overall academic record. A critical consideration in setting the cut score is that it truly reflects that the student has little if any understanding of the materials and concepts in the course. It is one thing to set a below basic cut score at 30% that reflects little academic competency by a student and a below basic cut score at 60% that reflects at least some though limited academic competency by a student.

I thank you in advance for the consideration of these comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Roebuck', written over a circular stamp or mark.

James R. Roebuck, Chairman
House of Representatives
Education Committee