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CHAIRMAN, REPUBLICAN POLICY
COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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

Dear Chairman Coccodrilli:

I write to you today from the perspective of a legislator who has aggressively been involved in the issue of graduation exams for the past 18 months in the General Assembly. Implementation of these exams will be a major policy change that will greatly affect every school district in the Commonwealth. This reason alone illustrates the need for approval by the General Assembly, which this plan currently lacks. As you consider the final-form version of Regulation #6-312, "Academic Standards and Assessment," please know that there are still significant questions yet to be answered regarding this serious policy decision such as:

1. What will the average remediation cost be to school districts?
2. How many new teachers will have to be hired?
3. Will students lose class time for remediation or be required to stay after school?
4. Will districts need to buy new or additional text books to fit the curriculum shift?
5. What will these tests look like?
6. What will the cut score be?
7. Where in statute has the General Assembly directed the development of this policy decision?

The answers to these questions are essential to the evaluation of the proposal.

The lack of foresight combined with the presence of numerous variables exacerbates the already poor decision not to have a trial program. I take the education of our children very seriously and do not wish to gamble with it by implementing a plan which so far only resembles a rough sketch. There has been a meager attempt to mitigate this rushed alteration of our public school system by claiming the Keystones are voluntary; however, this is a misnomer. If a school district does not use the Keystones they will incur additional costs by being required to develop and validate their own exams. These costs present a financial barrier which makes the Keystones a forced choice for many school districts and a financially attractive one to all. Additionally, it is

the goal of this administration to replace the PSSAs with the Keystones. Therefore, three of the Keystones will most likely become mandatory.

The PSSAs provide valuable information regarding the proficiency of Pennsylvania's students and have charted the increased success of many school districts. More importantly the data from the PSSAs have identified those schools that are struggling. The Keystones will only re-measure what the PSSA's have already, rather than seek to address the causes of those weaknesses directly. It is towards those underperforming school districts identified by the PSSA that our attention and focus must be turned. Which types of teaching methods work? Which curriculums are the most effective? These are the questions that need to be answered. These are the questions that will not be answered by the Keystones.

House Republican Education Chairman Paul Clymer introduced House Resolution 456 which urges the Governor to cease funding of implementation of high school graduation requirements until the General Assembly establishes a policy by legislation. This Resolution currently has 159 cosponsors and reaffirms the General Assembly needs more details and further involvement.

For the aforementioned reasons I respectfully urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission to deny approval of Regulation #6-312.

Sincerely,



Stanley E. Saylor, Chairman
Republican Policy Committee

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