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From: Paul Billman [paebillman@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2008 1:08 PM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Cc: IRRRC; jrholdes@pasen.gov; musto@pasenate.com; jstairs@pahousegop.com; jroebuck@pahouse.net; dmilne@pahousegop.com; cruble@pahousegop.com; eerickson@pasen.gov; andydmniman@pasenate.com
Subject: Graduation Competency Assessments

June 5, 2008

State Board of Education
 333 Market Street
 Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Mr. Buckheit, and State Board of Education Members,

As a concerned parent and graduate student in public administration I would like to express my opposition to the proposed Graduation Competency Assessment (GCA) exams. These proposed exams are a bad idea for the following reasons:

- Waste valuable class time for learning
- Cause panic and undo stress among high school seniors
- Does not address the root problem of ineffective schools
- Waste of money and resources
- Enhance the concept of a nation of test takers
- Will only validate that poorer schools produce poor students
- Is an attempt by the State Board of Education to take critical education responsibilities away from local authorities

A better alternative for the State Board of Education to ensure that diploma's have merit would be to provide those schools which are deficient with funding to increase teacher training and provide valuable educational resources. The GSA exam will simply demonstrate what is learned from the PSSA test, that failing schools provide a lower quality of education for their students.

Education in this country has always been a responsibility of local authorities. "No Child Left Behind" gave us a mechanism to identify those schools that are not providing a quality education, these schools should not be punished with another test but need state funding to better serve their students. Please do not add another layer of testing, instead look for ways work with local authorities to improve schools that have been identified by PSSA as failing.

Thank you,

Paul Billman
 Tredyffrin/Easttown Resident

6/5/2008