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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

----- Original Message -----
From: mhaley <mhaley@libcom.com>
To: Kaufman, Kim
Sent: Thu Jun 12 12:25:02 2008
Subject: Proposed GCAs

June 10, 2008

Dear Members of the Education Committee and Elected Officials,

Please let me begin by offering my sincere thank you for serving the residents of Pennsylvania as elected officials. In your chosen position, you are directly accountable for your debates, decisions, and your votes on issues, which directly impact education, business development, and the residents of Pennsylvania.

I am writing to voice my opposition to the GCAs. I currently reside in the West Jefferson Hills School District, where we are fortunate to be part of a growing community. Many new residents state the reason for their choosing homes in our area is based upon the stellar reputation of our school district, which ranks 15th in the State of Pennsylvania. Each of our five schools have received the Keystone Awards for proficiency every year since the awards inception. I have heard much discussion and debate on the topic of GCAs and Secretary Zahorchak state that "the GCAs will better prepare our children to enter the work force immediately after graduating from high school."

The following addresses my concerns with his argument and the GCAs:

1. We should be encouraging our students to be lifelong learners, even after they are gainfully employed
2. There have been numerous studies done, which clearly define the increased earning power of obtaining a post -secondary degree.
3. In the West Jefferson Hills School District, more than 85% of our graduates go on to post -secondary education. Our students enrolled in the technology education program also frequently go on to acquire their associates degree or to enroll in apprenticeship programs for their craft.
4. It seems as if Secretary Zahorchak is taking the path of least resistance in his quest to reform education. Rather than devise a one size fits all educational plan, why does he not take the time to review and study school districts which could be termed successful, seek their input, and act upon their recommendations and achievements.
5. The GCAs would be another form of mandated testing with little prediction for student success. Schools should provide a setting for students and teachers to engage in education with enthusiasm and encouragement. Far too often unexpected teachable moments are lost to the intense year -long preparations for the annual PSSAs.
6. One test or for that matter a series of tests do not define success for a child.

There is also much debate currently among those in post -secondary education on the benefit of the SATs in determining academic preparedness and student success. If these institutions of higher learning are questioning the benefit of a standardized test in determining student success perhaps, we should seek their knowledge and expertise on ways to improve education rather than the opinion of a temporary CFO. I personally follow business trends across the nation and recurrently observe qualified, educated, employees

being displaced to meet the bottom line. Public Companies are far too often defined by their stockholders' profit margin, and it is unsettling to think that the future education of our children rests in their hands.

In conclusion, I am the proud mother of two children who graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School and received their post- secondary degree from Allegheny College. My children's success had little to do with the PSSAs and much more to do with the well rounded, challenging education they received in the West Jefferson Hills School District.

Thank you for taking the time to address my concerns.

Sincerely,

Marian Villella Haley

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