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Mr. Jim Buckheit  
Executive Director  
State Board of Education  
333 Market Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
June 9, 2008

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Jim,

Hope you are well. It has been too long but I continue to hear very positive things about the wonderful work you are doing. Since September of 2007, I have been working for Casey Family Programs. Though they are based in Seattle, I am out stationed in Philadelphia. The work is an extension of the national child welfare consulting projects I have been doing for many years but I have enjoyed this new team of people. However, this letter is coming to you as a part of my volunteer efforts with the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. I am on their board and was recently brought up to date on an issue of great importance regarding educational achievement.

I am writing this letter to express my support for the State Board of Education's proposed regulations, which would change Pennsylvania's high school graduation requirements and result in a system of supports for students and schools coupled with a sensible approach to student assessment.

To succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, all students need to graduate from high school with the academic foundation required to transition to postsecondary education or workforce training programs, without the need for remediation. This implies that they must have a combination of essential competencies and critical thinking skills.

To graduate from high school in Pennsylvania today, students must achieve to the state's academic standards. They can currently demonstrate this achievement by scoring proficient or advanced on the 11<sup>th</sup> grade PSSAs, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade retake, or via a local school district assessment that is aligned to the state standards.

Unfortunately, 44 percent of students who graduated in 2007 did not score proficient or advanced on the PSSAs, but received diplomas based on the local assessment. In addition to this, more than 50 percent of high school graduates attending Pennsylvania's community colleges must take – and pay for – remedial courses on subject matter they should have learned in high school before they can take college-level coursework. Clearly, way too many of our students are graduating from high schools who have not met the state's academic standards.

I feel the State Board's proposal will help to address this issue and will make sure that all students in the Commonwealth have access to the supports they need to succeed, and when they graduate from high school, are prepared for the next chapter of their lives.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment about the proposed regulations. I certainly hope they are enacted to ensure that our young people have the academic foundation they need to become successful adults.

Sincerely,

Paul DiLorenzo, ACSW, MLSP