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Buckheit, James

**From:** dpascale@firstenergycorp.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 11, 2008 11:26 AM  
**To:** jrbuckheit@state.pa.us

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION**Subject:** Chapter 4 Academic Standards and Assessments

Mr Buckheit,

I am writing to express my support for the State Board of Education's proposed Chapter 4 (Academic Standards and Assessments) regulations that create a common statewide system of accountability and supports to insure that all of Pennsylvania's high school graduates possess a uniform knowledge and skill set that prepares them for productive adulthood. As a business leader, I see everyday that jobs of the new economy require higher levels of academic skills than ever before. In interviews with local businesses, we hear that they are finding it difficult to locate and retain qualified workers to fill existing positions in industry. Attached is an article that appeared in the Erie Times News on May 19, 2008.

### Unprepared Work Recruits Signal Trouble

Published: May 19, 2008 6:00AM Erie Times News

An estimated 1,800 to 2,000 jobs in Erie County are going unfilled today because applicants aren't prepared to do the work. That's a bombshell.

The region's businesses and schools should join forces to confront this apparent gap in education and training.

Jake Rouch, vice president of economic development for the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership, believes the primary reason the applicants can't meet minimal job requirements is that far too many don't have the basic skills required to enter an on-the-job training program.

Dave Tullio, president of Custom Engineering Co., supports that argument. Tullio told the Erie Times-News Editorial Board that many recruited workers aren't prepared to learn how to do manufacturing work. As alarming as that is, it sounds like a solvable problem.

Local industry leaders, working with Rouch and other economic-development officials, should work with school districts to get a better handle on the problems and their potential training solutions.

In some cases, job applicants don't know how to properly fill out job applications. Our schools can teach this to students.

In other cases, job applicants don't know how to dress for job interviews, and aren't prepared to

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successfully get through job interviews. Our schools can show students how to prepare for job interviews.

Work-ethic issues are one more reason these jobs go unfilled. Our schools can try harder to help students understand that a positive attitude and the willingness to work hard are basic job requirements for virtually any job.

Many applicants are flunking drug tests, even though they are told that drug tests are a condition for employment. Our schools can even remind students that passing a drug test is another basic requirement in getting employed once they leave school.

Yes, these are all basic employment requirements that students should be receiving in schools. Far too many apparently don't have them. Our schools must address this and plug this education gap. Employers can help show our schools what is needed.

Employers and students can't sit around waiting for the proposed Erie County community college to provide this education and training. This is a problem today. Those 1,800 to 2,000 unfilled jobs illustrate that help and education is needed now.

If Pennsylvania is going to compete in today's global economy, it is critically important that every one of our young people graduates from high school with the strong academic foundation necessary to go on to postsecondary education or workforce training programs. We need an educational system that produces students with the skills to be successful, to help businesses succeed and grow, and to attract new business and investments to our state. Today however, employers have no real assurance that a high school graduate has the required basic skills to be successful in an entry-level job or to advance within the company.

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