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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I am writing to express my support of the State Board of Education's proposed Chapter 4 (Academic Standards and Assessments) regulations which would revise the Commonwealth's high school graduation requirements to guarantee that all graduates achieve the state's academic standards and have a minimum level of knowledge and skills.

It is critical in today's global economy that all of our students graduate from high school prepared to go onto some kind of postsecondary education -- whether it is technical school, 2- or 4-year college, apprentice programs or workforce training programs.

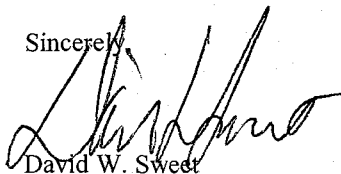
Too many students must take, and pay for, non-credit remedial coursework or be remediated by area employers in basic skills. This is not an isolated phenomenon. Forty-four percent of all 2007 high school graduates failed to demonstrate proficiency on the PSSA. These students came from school districts all across the Commonwealth -- urban, suburban and rural. Sadly, these young people are graduating from high school without any real assurance that they have the academic background necessary to transition to the next chapters of their lives.

The State Board's proposed regulations offer students and school districts a variety of options to assess student achievement of the state's academic standards. Students can demonstrate proficiency on any one or combination of -- the 11th grade PSSAs, Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, local assessments that have been independently validated, or a series of end of course exams called Graduation Competency Assessments (GCAs). The GCAs could replace current final exams in English, math, science and social studies and would not result in additional testing for students. In addition, the GCAs would be administered immediately following the related instruction, provide students multiple opportunities to retake the GCAs or parts of the GCAs to ensure success, and make accommodation for students with disabilities and English language learners.

The proposed regulations also call for specific supports for students and for schools -- including mandatory remediation for struggling students, voluntary model curriculum that is aligned with the standards, and professional development and technical assistance for teachers and schools.

I wholeheartedly support the State Board's proposed regulations and hope they are enacted. They are a sensible strategy to make certain that every student from every school district in the Commonwealth has achieved the state's academic standards and are prepared to transition to successful adulthood.

Sincerely,



David W. Sweet