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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Pennsylvania State Board of Education  
333 Market Street, First Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Board Members:

As the world's largest business federation representing more than 3 million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region in the American economy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce applauds the efforts of Governor Rendell and the Pennsylvania Department of Education to strengthen the assessments used to determine if students have mastered the skills necessary for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

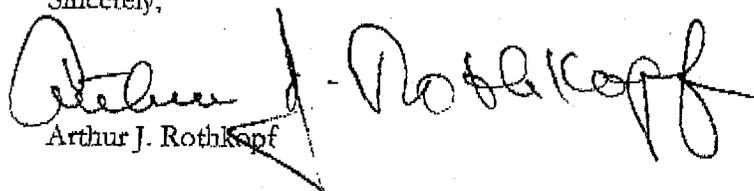
Nationwide, only about one-third of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders—and fewer than 20% of low-income and minority children—are proficient in reading and math. Only about two-thirds of 9<sup>th</sup> graders graduate from high school within four years. And of those students who graduate many are often unprepared for college and the workplace. With 90% of the fastest growing jobs requiring some form of postsecondary education, this problem will only worsen.

To maintain competitiveness, companies require access to a diverse, educated, skilled, and mobile workforce. The business community strongly supports—and has been working towards—developing long-term solutions to increase the pool of qualified American workers. At the same time, the Chamber supports the creation of high-quality, well-paying jobs in the United States.

In 2007, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for a Competitive Workforce and the Center for American Progress released *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*. This report underscores the importance of academic achievement, accountability, data systems, rigor of standards, and rate of return on education spending.

As a nation, we must continue to focus our efforts on ensuring that students graduate from high school with a meaningful education—one that will prepare them for postsecondary education, workforce participation, and civic engagement.

Sincerely,

  
Arthur J. Rothkopf

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