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From: jerigoldman@comcast.net

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Sent: Saturday, June 14, 2008 6:09 PM**To:** 00statbd@psupen.psu.eduINDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION**Subject:** Statement in opposition to proposed GCAs

Gentlemen:

I am writing to express strenuous opposition to the proposed adoption of the GCAs--or any large-scale group assessment, including the PSSA--as a high school graduation requirement in Pennsylvania schools. My background is in clinical and school psychology and educational administration, particularly special education.

This assessment is being touted as a means to ensure that students who graduate from our schools do indeed possess the skills needed for entry into higher education and/or the world of work--a well-documented impossibility. Large-scale testing cannot and will not increase student achievement.

What such a requirement will do is cost the taxpayers millions and millions of additional dollars every year; astronomically increase our drop-out rate, as shown by the experience of many other states; violate the civil rights of many groups, particularly those in urban areas, those in special education, those who are English Language Learners, those in career and technical educational programs, those who do not "test well," and/or those "of color," who typically are forced to attend inadequate schools with unequal resources, and yet will be expected to reach the same level of proficiency. It also quite predictably will produce a massive increase in the number of students classified as being in need of special education, as parents will understandably seek the protections of law and the individualization of an IEP for their children. Not inconsequentially, it further basically proposes to violate the principle of local control of our schools, vesting the function of determining graduation from them in a centralized bureaucracy instead.

None of these are desirable outcomes. If suddenly we now have millions and millions more of taxpayer dollars to spend on educating our children, let us spend them instead on desirable outcomes arrived at via effective practices.

The GCA proposal represents a profligate attempt to use public money for a purpose which it cannot possibly attain. At best, it confuses the problem (too many students with inadequate skills at graduation) with an incorrect solution (test, remediate, test, remediate, test, etc.)--and it proposes to do so in the face of clear, consistent, very vocal public opposition. At present, I am aware of the well-reasoned, articulate position statements of 23 professional groups expressing resolute opposition to the GCAs--or the use of any large-scale testing instrument--to determine high school graduation.

I must assume, therefore, that those who insist on implementing the inherently discriminatory practice of denying a diploma because of poor performance on a single measure have some end in sight other than improving the preparation of graduating students.

I urge you to reject the proposed GCAs.

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