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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

June 10, 2008

Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
 PA State Board of Education
 333 Market Street
 Harrisburg, PA. 17126-0333.
jbuckheit@state.pa.us.

RE: Oppose PDE Graduate Competency Assessments, GCAs.

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

As a PA taxpayer, parent, and Annville-Cleona School Board Director, I strongly OPPOSE your proposed GCAs for PA students. They are costly, redundant, and unnecessary.

COSTLY in dollars, manpower, more bureaucracy, and time taken away from educating students. We need time and resources to focus on history, social studies, civics, English, math, sciences, foreign languages, agricultural or career technology issues for the curriculum, not more tests.

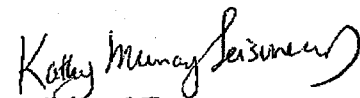
REDUNDANT because the PSSA exams are already required. Other tests are already available for the graduate record exam, GRE, to obtain the GED, graduate equivalency degree.

UNNECESSARY because funds used for the GCA exams would be better spent on educational programs that work for high risk districts, not more paper-and-pencil standardized tests.

My great uncle, Edwin A. Link of Binghamton NY, inventor of the LINK TRAINER + other simulation systems for training pilots in World War II, was unable to pass paper-and-pencil tests. But he was a genius designing organs, simulators, + deep sea submarines + mini-submarines.

Enclosed a copy of our Annville-Cleona School District petition opposing your GCAs, sent earlier this year. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kathy Murray Leisure, MD
 Annville-Cleona School Board Director, parent, and PA taxpayer.

Encl.

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RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
ANNVILLE-CLEONA SCHOOL DISTRICT

TOTAL P.003

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has approved a proposal to revise the current high school graduation requirements under the Chapter 4 regulations to require students to pass a series of standardized high stakes Graduation Competency Assessments in order to get a diploma; and

WHEREAS, these new requirements and exams will be the same for all students, whether they are taking college prep or vocational courses, are English language learners or participating in individualized programs, and all students effectively will be required to take the same courses in order to pass this new battery of state tests; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 4 currently allows districts to use either the PSSA or rigorous local assessments for their students to demonstrate proficiency of the state academic standards; and it is misleading and incorrect to make the assumption that because students demonstrate their achievements on local assessments rather than the PSSA that there is a disconnect between proficiency and graduation; and

WHEREAS, although the GCA proposal permits schools to use a local assessment option, it establishes numerous limitations, including the elimination of the ability to use various assessment strategies now available to local entities and requires local tests to be closely modeled to the GCAs; and

WHEREAS, decades of research shows many reasons why standardized pencil and paper test scores should never be the determining factor in making major decisions about students, and that a diploma should be granted based on the coursework, tests and quizzes, presentations, projects and papers throughout the student's career; and

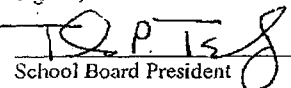
WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has not prepared a cost analysis or fiscal note, even though this will create a large financial impact on state and local budgets, and the State Board's own costing-out study did not include the costs for this new system and found that the state already is \$4.4 billion short in helping school districts prepare students to meet the academic standards by 2014; and

WHEREAS, the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test development and validation, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs. Given the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases, school districts have limited ability to fund these potential new costs.

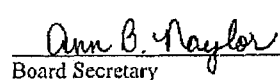
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the board of school directors of the Annvile-Cleona school district opposes the State Board of Education's proposal to enact Graduation Competency Assessments and any other regulation or legislation that usurps the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma. This resolution will be shared with the State Board of Education, state legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Adopted this 18th day of February, 2008.

Signed,


School Board President

Attest:


Board Secretary (seal)

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