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Pennsylvania Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.

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RECEIVED
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

June 12, 2008

State Board of Education
ATTN: James Buckheit, Executive Director
333 Market St.
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Re: Proposed Chapter 4 Regulations
Graduation Competency Assessments

RECEIVED
JUN 16 2008
PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania PTA, we are writing you today with our concerns about the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments (GCAs). At our April 2008 meeting, the Pennsylvania PTA State Board of Managers unanimously approved a position statement against the proposed GCAs.

It reads:

Position Statement

High Stakes Testing and Graduation Exams

Pennsylvania PTA supports legislation that would set limitations as to the number of mandated tests and assessments per school year. PTA opposes the use of standardized tests as the sole criterion for measuring a school's or student's progress. An assessment system should use multiple measures of performance, offer tests that are linked to the standards students are expected to achieve, and include other indicators of educational quality, such as competency of teaching staff, class size, parent involvement, facility condition, and quality of instructional materials.

Pennsylvania PTA also believes that Pennsylvania and its schools must have the resources – including adequate financial and technical support – to address specific problems and ensure that schools can meet high standards. Student assessment should identify how instruction and learning can be improved.

Pennsylvania PTA does not support legislation or regulations that would:


- 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.

- Require all students, whether they are taking college prep or vocational courses, are English language learners or participating in individualized programs, to take the same courses in order to pass Graduation Competency Assessments.
- Weaken or eliminate schools' use of rigorous local assessment options, which allows their students to demonstrate proficiency of the state academic standards.
- Create a large financial impact on state and local budgets by requiring 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.
- Usurp the authority of local school districts to determine whether their students have earned a high school diploma.

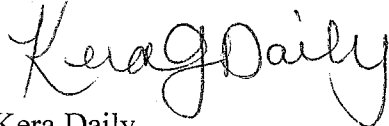
This position statement will be shared with the State Board of Education, state legislators including local legislators and members of the Senate and House Education Committees, and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

We thank you for your time and consideration in learning about the Pennsylvania PTA's position on the Graduation Competency Assessments.

Sincerely,



Caroline Allen
President, Pennsylvania PTA



Kera Daily
Legislation and Advocacy Chairman
Pennsylvania PTA