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SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
281 McMAHON DRIVE
NORTH HUNTINGDON, PENNSYLVANIA 15642
(724) 861-3000

2696

DR. JOHN C. BOYLAN
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DR. TRACY A. McNELLY
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April 23, 2008

RECEIVED

APR 28 REC'D

Representative James Roebuck
House of Representatives
P O Box 202188
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2188

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

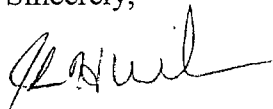
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Dear Representative Roebuck:

Enclosed is a copy of a resolution passed by the Norwin Board of School Directors on April 21, 2008 in opposition to the proposed Graduation Competency Assessments (GCAs) now being considered by the State legislature. As stated in the resolution, the Norwin School Board believes these assessments usurp the authority of the Norwin School District to determine the graduation requirements for its students.

The Board asks that you consider the issues addressed in the resolution when deciding the merits of the proposed GCAs and take a position in opposition to them. The Norwin School District thanks you in advance for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



John H. Wilson
Board Secretary
Norwin School District

c: Dr. John C. Boylan, Superintendent of Schools
Pennsylvania School Boards Association
Pennsylvania Board of Education
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Norwin School District State Legislators
Westmoreland County Superintendents
Westmoreland Intermediate Unit Executive Director

**RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSED HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS
BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
NORWIN SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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 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

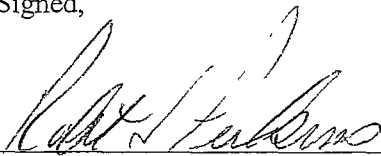
WHEREAS, the proposal requires school districts to absorb many new costs related to revising curriculum, professional development, test development and validation, test preparation and administration, remediation and other costs. Given the state's funding shortfall and the Act 1 limitations on tax increases,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

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the school directors of the Norwin 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.

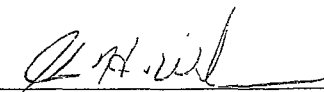
Adopted this 21st day of April, 2008.

Signed,

Attest:



Robert J. Perkins, President



John H. Wilson, Board Secretary (seal)