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**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

June 12, 2009

The Honorable Jeffrey Piccola
Chairman
Senate Education Committee
173 Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable James R. Roebuck, Jr.
Chairman
House Education Committee
208 Irvis Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Andrew E. Dinniman
Minority Chairman
Senate Education Committee
183 Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Paul I. Clymer
Minority Chairman
House Education Committee
216 Ryan Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senators Piccola and Dinniman and
Representatives Roebuck and Clymer:

Recent proposals by the State Board of Education to require students to pass exams in order to qualify for a high school diploma have generated unprecedented debate across the state and within the General Assembly. The considerable impact this highly complex and critically important public policy decision clearly would have on students, parents, schools and taxpayers calls for unprecedented collaboration among state policymakers.

As I have expressed both privately and publicly, I believe that all state policymakers should have a substantial, timely and meaningful voice in this debate. In particular, I believe that members of the General Assembly have offered and continue to offer important input, and the willingness of the Education Committee chairs to find a workable plan has been especially encouraging. I also believe that there are significant elements of common ground among the various proposals that have been put forward in recent months, and that a solution of which we can all be proud is both possible and necessary for our graduates.

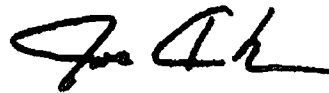
Therefore, in my role as chairman of the State Board of Education, I intend to -- in continued consultation with you, your colleagues, and the education community -- work towards identifying a common ground solution in upcoming days. When that is complete, I further intend to transmit to you, for review and consideration as you deem appropriate, the policy proposal that I would anticipate the State Board would take up

later this year. Sharing this policy proposal with you in this way would afford you and your colleagues an opportunity to review the proposal before the State Board formally proceeds with the regulatory process and submits it to your committees for review under the Regulatory Review Act. As the issues and possible solutions have been well articulated in the many hearings, debates, conversations and recent proposals, I anticipate sending you my recommended proposal in the very near future.

Please understand that I intend to take this step solely in my role as chairman of the State Board of Education, and in recognition of the legislature's appropriate interest in this issue. My actions would not reflect an official action of the State Board itself and does not necessarily reflect the views of any other member of the Board.

I look forward to working with you and your colleagues as we continue our collective efforts to develop an acceptable final product that will serve the needs of students, schools, higher education, employers and taxpayers. And thank you for your continued commitment to education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Torsella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Joe Torsella
Chairman