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**PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION**

June 6, 2008

Jim Buckheit
Pennsylvania State Board of Education
333 Market Street, 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Board Members

Your efforts to implement new High School Graduation Requirements are laudatory and I endorse them wholeheartedly. If our nation is to continue to be competitive in a global economy, we need competent high school graduates who are capable of assuming jobs in our technology based economy or who are capable of advanced study in higher education. It clearly is not too much to expect that high school graduates are competent in literacy and numeracy. The time has come to hold student, parents, and school districts accountable for student learning that will legitimize a high school diploma.

From my point of view, the State Board of Education has provided a wide range of options for students to demonstrate competence in order to earn a high school diploma. Personally, I find the options to be more than reasonable; the fact that a student can take the Graduation Competency Assessments multiple times in order to demonstrate competency is both humane and wise. The fact that there are multiple options for a student to demonstrate competence provides great flexibility. It is difficult for me to understand why anyone would object to such a fair approach to determining competence.

More importantly, the fact that the state will assume the costs of testing and provide resources to districts and students to enable them to achieve competence makes eminent good sense. School people tend to react negatively to state or federal mandates in general, and then tend to react vociferously when mandates are issues with no supportive funding. In its wisdom, the State Board of Education has addressed these concerns by providing options for testing and both educational and fiscal support for this important endeavor. I congratulate you on your approach to this important issue and urge you to adopt the new requirements.

Richard C. Wallace, Jr. Ed.D.
Superintendent Emeritus, Pittsburgh Public Schools
Education Leadership Initiative, University of Pittsburgh

C: Hon. Chelsa Wagner, Hon. Jake Wheatly

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