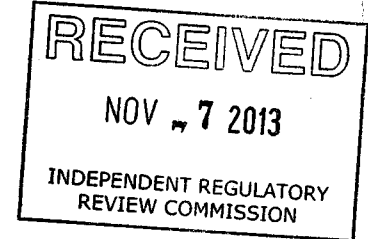


2976 *Pennsylvania*

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

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November 7, 2013



The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC)
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

Re: Final-Form Regulations #6-326 – Academic Standards and Assessments

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

We are writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board (PAWIB) to express strong support for the final-form regulation 6-326 related to academic standards and assessments. The Board urges the Independent Regulatory Review Commission's approval of the regulation to adopt the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math, and making the aligned assessments, including the Keystone Exams, a graduation requirement.

The PAWIB was established February 14, 2000 by Executive Order of Governor Tom Ridge. For nearly 14 years, the PAWIB has served as governors' principal private-sector policy advisor on building a strong workforce development system aligned with state education policies and economic development goals. The PAWIB members are appointed by the governor and represent a cross-section of business executives, labor officials, education leaders, economic development practitioners and local elected officials. Additionally, the cabinet secretaries of five state agencies, as well as four members of the general assembly, serve on the board.

Last year, the PAWIB unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing the Chapter 4 regulatory package. These important educational reforms will create rigorous, internationally benchmarked academic standards to prepare our students to be successful in postsecondary education and 21st century careers while providing a strong system of supports for students who require additional assistance. The aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams, provide a practical accountability system for measuring student achievement and ensuring students have met the standards by the time they graduate from high school.

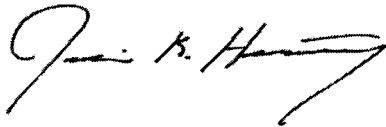
Time and time again, the PAWIB hears from employers who report that high school graduates are not prepared to enter the workforce; from leaders of organized labor who explain many Pennsylvania high school students cannot enter and successfully complete apprenticeship programs; from higher education administrators that far too many entering students require significant remediation before attempting college-level instruction; and from military officers that recruits are not prepared for the rigorous learning and training required in the armed forces.

Pennsylvania is not alone in facing these challenges. That's why governors from around the nation have been working jointly for the past eight years to improve academic standards and assessments seeking to ensure that all American youth are career and college ready.

Pennsylvania first implemented statewide academic standards in 1999. Our efforts to prepare young people for careers and post-secondary education have transcended gubernatorial administrations, changes of cabinet secretaries and key personnel, reversals of legislative majorities, and the mood swings of political rhetoric. PAWIB members – representing diverse interest and points of view – share a common view that high academic standards and careful assessment of the mastery of core learning are essential building blocks to a workforce that is ready for 21st Century challenges and opportunities.

Again, we strongly support the regulations and urge the IRRC to vote to approve them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia K. Heathway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Julia K. Heathway
Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Malone". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a prominent initial 'D'.

David J. Malone
Chairman, Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board