

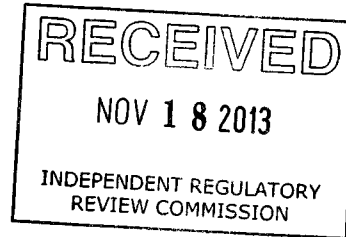
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Philadelphia Education Fund
Champions for Quality Public Education

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November 15, 2013



The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market St., 14th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

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

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

I am writing to express the Philadelphia Education Fund's support for the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math. We encourage the State to adopt them.

In today's world, it is increasingly important for young people to graduate from high school with the academic skills needed to flourish in college and/or career. However, too many young Pennsylvanians lack these necessary skills although they have received their high school diploma. The adoption of the more rigorous and internationally benchmarked Pennsylvania Core Standards is an important step towards ensuring children across the Commonwealth graduate with the academic foundation required for postsecondary success.

However, we are concerned that the Keystone Exams do not do justice to the Core. The keystones are not best-in-class assessments. Both national consortia – PARC and Smarter Balance – have produced higher quality assessment tools. Rigorous alternative assessment methods are also available. We urge the State to remain open to the regulation's option of using assessment methods other than the Keystone Exams. At the Ed Fund we care deeply about what happens in classrooms, and we are concerned that the keystones are thin assessments of learning that will drive thin instruction and limit schools' flexibility in their approach to educating students.

We are also deeply concerned that cash strapped districts do not currently have the resources to adequately prepare for the Core. Districts need resources to implement well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren A. Spielman".

Darren A. Spielman, PhD
President/CEO