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Changing Lives.*

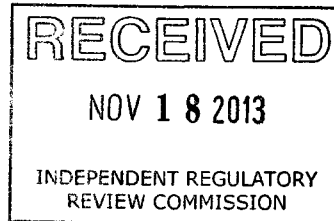
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2976

November 18, 2013



The Honorable Silvan B. Lutkewitte, III
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC)
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

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

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

I am writing to express my strong support for the final-form regulation 6-326 related to academic standards and assessments. I urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission's approval. The regulation adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math, along with aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams.

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 support for students. 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.

This regulation makes some important changes to the Commonwealth's current education standards and assessments. If approved, this final-form regulation will replace the national Common Core State Standards with the Pennsylvania-specific PA Core Standards. It will also reduce the number of Keystone Exams from ten to five, thus reducing testing time for students and cutting the number of subjects in which school districts are required to provide remediation and administer project-based assessments in half. The final-form regulation also eliminates the requirement that every high school senior complete a culminating project -- which will free up resources that can be used to administer the project-based assessments or provide supplemental instruction.

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Pennsylvania's students are competing with students from across the country and around the world for college admissions and for jobs. We know, however, that too many of our young people are graduating without the academic foundation and skills they need to succeed. These final-form regulations offer students and school districts a variety of pathways to success and include specific supports for students and schools.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Esther L. Bush", is written over a large, loopy circular scribble.

Esther L. Bush
President & CEO