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November 19, 2013

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

Email: irrc@irrc.state.pa.us

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

Team Pennsylvania Foundation supports final-form regulation #6-326 (Academic Standards and Assessments) that adopts the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math and aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams. The regulation also includes important safeguards and supports to ensure struggling students have the extra help they need to succeed.

As a nonpartisan, public-private partnership with a focus on economic and workforce development, Team PA entered into this conversation back in 2008 to respond to the concerns of Pennsylvania business owners. It's quite simple: with facilities and potential job opportunities from Erie to Easton and everywhere in between, businesses need employee predictability, and business leaders need to have confidence in the quality of Pennsylvania's high school diploma.

A 2009 survey of 400 business owners and senior managers conducted by Susquehanna Polling & Research determined the following: more than 80 percent believed that statewide education standards and course-by-course final exams would improve the quality of the workforce in Pennsylvania.

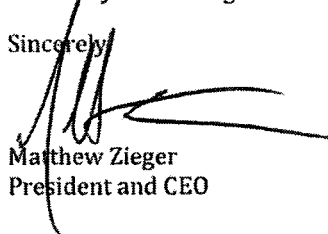
Business leaders continue to talk about recent graduates who lack the basic reading, writing, and math skills to succeed in the workplace, and that's not surprising, since about one-third of students who graduate from high school in the commonwealth -- about 44,000 each year -- fail to perform at a proficient level on the state's 11th grade reading and math assessments.

When high school students are allowed to graduate without the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education or the workplace, businesses, taxpayers, parents, students, and institutions of higher education are forced to waste significant amounts of money, time, and resources on remediation.

Looking to the future, we need a vibrant educational system with rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards (PA Core Standards) and aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams, which produce students with the necessary skills and to help businesses succeed and grow.

Team PA supports the adoption of strong standards such as the Pennsylvania Core Standards and aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams. We encourage the Commission to adopt the final-form regulation, which we believe would add significant value to Pennsylvania's high school diploma and workforce.

Sincerely,


Matthew Zieger
President and CEO

