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VIA UPS BLUE

October 31, 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:

I am writing to express my strong support for 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 business leader and employer of over 4,000 Pennsylvanians, I see every day that jobs of the new economy require higher levels of academic skills than ever before. If Pennsylvania is going to compete in today's global economy, it is critically important that every one of our young people graduates from high school with the strong academic foundation necessary to go on to postsecondary education or workforce training programs – regardless of what high school they attend, their race, income level or aspirations.

For too long, Pennsylvania has been graduating students who are not prepared for college or a career. About one-third of students who graduate from high school in the Commonwealth – about 44,000 each year – do not score proficient or advanced on the Commonwealth's 11th grade reading and math assessments.

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 skills to be successful and to help businesses like mine succeed and grow.

The final-form regulation makes some important changes to the Commonwealth's current education standards and assessments. If the final-form regulation is approved, the Pennsylvania Core Standards will replace the national Common Core State Standards. The regulation also reduces the number of Keystone Exams from 10 to five which will substantially reduce testing time for students. Reducing the number of Keystone Exams will also cut the number of subjects in which school districts are required to provide remediation and administer project-based assessments in half. In addition, the regulation eliminates the senior culminating project, allowing school districts to reallocate those resources to provide remediation and administer project-based assessments.

I strongly support the adoption of stronger standards such as the Pennsylvania Core Standards and aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams. Please adopt the final-form regulation and ensure that all our

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students have a strong academic foundation on which to build productive and successful lives. Our students and our economy will benefit.

Sincerely,



Mike George
President & CEO
QVC, Inc.

cc: David W. Patti, President & CEO, Pennsylvania Business Council