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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

2976

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APPOINTMENT

PENNSYLVANIA'S GOVERNORS COUNCIL LIAISON
FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS
AND THE MARINE CORPS HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

I am writing to urge the Independent Regulatory Review Commission to vote to adopt the final-form regulation #6-326 (Academic Standards and Assessments). The regulation would help to ensure Pennsylvania's high school graduates are ready for the rigors of postsecondary education, the 21st century workforce or military service by adopting the Pennsylvania Core Standards in English and math and aligned assessments, including Keystone Exams.

As a long-term member of the House Education Committee, I have targeted my efforts towards educational initiatives that can close achievement gaps and ensure greater opportunity for children. Final-form regulation will raise expectations for students by implementing Pennsylvania Core Standards – rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards, informed by Pennsylvania educators, which outline what students should know and be able to do in each grade level. The standards do not tell teachers how to teach or what materials to use. Those decisions continue to be left up to the local school districts. Many school districts, including the Pittsburgh Public Schools, have been working for the past few years to align their curriculum with the Pennsylvania Core Standards.

The final-form regulation also makes important changes to Keystone Exams. Keystone Exams provide an effective way to measure student achievement and ensure that students have met the academic standards by the time they graduate from high school. The Keystone Exams also assess students closer instruction when the information is more relevant to the student. The final-form regulation will reduce the number of Keystone Exams from 10 to five and delay the timeline for the exams becoming graduation requirements from 2015 to 2017 giving schools and students even more time to prepare.

The Final-form is a key safeguard for students who are struggling and don't score proficient on the Keystone Exam. They will have the opportunity to get support and the chance to re-take the exam, or just the portion of the exams that they didn't pass. The issue of adequate and equitable resources for students to meet academic expectations is a valid concern. I will continue my fight for funding levels necessary to support our children's education – including supplemental instruction. However, I don't believe we can afford to wait until the commonwealth resolves the state's funding gap. We must enact high standards and aligned assessments for students now. Doing nothing or fighting against an attempt

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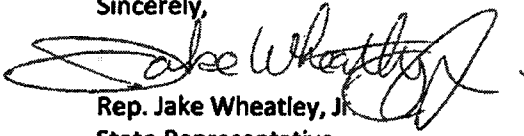
final-form regulation (cont.)

to raise the expectations, rigor and support for our children is a gamble I am unwilling to take. I believe that our current system lacks the ability to meet the needs of all of our children due to disparities, low expectations and the faulty assumption that our children will not be able to achieve at high levels.

Pennsylvania students are competing with students across the country and around the world for college admissions and for jobs. This regulation will help to ensure the commonwealth's high school graduates will have the strong educational foundation to become successful adults.

Again, I strongly support the final-form regulation and urge IRRC to vote to adopt it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jake Wheatley, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Rep. Jake Wheatley, Jr.
State Representative
19th Legislative District
Allegheny County