

Cooper, Kathy

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From: Deborah Hawke Spencer [ctdspencer3@verizon.net]
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2012 1:46 PM
To: andy@pasenate.com; wkampf@pahousegop.com; IRRRC; ra-stateboardofed@pa.gov
Subject: Proposed Changes to Chapter 4 Regulations

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IRRRC

November 5, 2012

Dear Senator Dinniman, Honorable Warren Kampf, Independent Regulatory Review Commission and State Board of Education:

I am a resident of the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District, and I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed changes to Chapter 4 regulations regarding high school graduation requirements. Students in Tredyffrin/Easttown School District have historically experienced high degrees of success in college and the workplace, and I am concerned that the addition of high-stakes exit exams may have the unintended consequence of hindering students who are proficient but do not always demonstrate the fullest extent of their skills in a traditional testing environment. Beyond my opposition to the concept of graduation exams, I am further concerned by the following components of the proposed regulations:

- In addition to the Algebra 1, Literature and Biology Keystone Exam requirements, the State plans to add an exam in English Composition for the class of 2019 and beyond and a Civics and Government exam for the class of 2020 and beyond. Two separate tests in English Composition are unnecessary and a poor use of taxpayer resources. A Civics and Government exam will require expensive restructuring of high school curricula across the State because many local districts will need to move the related course out of the junior or senior year to an earlier year. The costs to local taxpayers for textbooks alone may exceed \$100,000 to facilitate such a change.
- The requirement of three years of instruction prior to an alternative assessment places an undue burden on students, limits their ability to choose other courses, and could harm the college admissions process. The alternative assessment path should be made available at an earlier point.
- Will this unfunded mandate permit flexibility for high-performing schools with a record of success and also provide additional support for struggling schools? Is this another State remedy that assumes "one size fits all?"
- Our school district is struggling with financial "sustainability" as the State continues to reduce its contributions to local districts, places limitations on district's ability to raise revenue, and then adds another layer of financial cost with no state assistance.

In addition and perhaps most important to me and the children is the excessive testing in our school district, which has caused teachers to "teach to the test". No longer are there creative ways of learning in our schools, for everyone is too worried about their own evaluations based on our students scores on tests, or the students concerns about their scores on the PSSA's. Personally I cannot fathom the millions of dollars that are being spent on testing and the administration of the same. when our budget is millions of

dollars short each year, and taxes are increasing on an annual basis to assist in reducing the deficit. Further more, just what are you accomplishing by all of this testing. It is no secret what schools are successful and what schools are not, and it should be just as easy to discern through honest and open discussions with parents and teachers which children need additional support, without subjecting every student in the state to needless standardized tests. Quite frankly you are robbing our children of a true education, and if this does not cease in the near future, you might as well just get them all laptops and have them go to school on line – for there won't be any money left for activities, and since all we do is test them, they can learn and take all of the tests online.

As a result if the many reasons I have tried to quickly articulate, I ask you to reconsider the need for the Keystone Exams, PSSA's, ERB's and the frequency with which they are administered. What has it done for the children???

Regards,

Deborah Hawke Spencer

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