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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Chairman Lutkewitte
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

November 19, 2013

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte –

I trust you are well.

This letter serves to express my deep concern with the proposed adoption of Pennsylvania's Common Core Standards. As Chairman of the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, I encourage you to reject approval of the amendments proposed by the Department of Education to Chapter 4 regulations.

Although I have a number of concerns, for the sake of brevity I will focus on the topic of data collection. I recognize that the board has attempted to address this topic in the final-form rulemaking process through the following revision:

The Board prepared revisions to the final-form rulemaking to...prohibit the expansion of student and family data collection due to the Pennsylvania Core Standards...

With this in mind, there is still room for serious concern about existing data collection practices, and how that existing data will be shared in the future on a broad and perhaps nationwide basis. If history is any guide, I would venture that even existing student data will be available more broadly to more "stakeholders" with the continued implementation of both Pennsylvania Core Standards and future federal mandates.

I doubt many parents are aware or would approve of the fact that all public school students in Pennsylvania are assigned a tracking number within the Pennsylvania Information Management System, or that student demographic information and student assessments are catalogued on an individual basis. It is also my understanding that Pennsylvania tracks information down to the courses taken and grades earned by each student, and that this data is shared with the federal government and even outside researchers.

Parents entrust their children to the care of our Commonwealth's public school system for hundreds of hours every school year. They deserve and expect that private, personal information about their children is not being catalogued in a government-run database outside their control, with little opportunity for review, used for purposes without their knowledge, and spread to unknown "stakeholders" with unknown motives.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this critical topic, and look forward to your response.

Kind Regards,

Handwritten signature of John Lawrence in black ink.

John Lawrence
State Representative
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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