

STATE SENATOR
MICHAEL J. STACK
5TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

SENATE BOX 203008
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3008
717-787-8608
FAX: 717-772-2162

12351 ACADEMY ROAD
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19154-1927
215-281-2539
FAX: 215-281-2798

8016 BUSTLETON AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19152-2602
215-695-1020
FAX: 215-695-1027

stack@psenate.com
www.senatorstack.com



Senate of Pennsylvania

November 20, 2013

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

Dear Chairman Lutkewitte:

I am writing to oppose Regulation #6-326: Academic Standards and Assessment relative to Common Core Standards and the Keystone Exams. The cost of this regulation has not been fully disclosed despite the attempts to garner key financial data by members of the General Assembly. I have seen estimates that the cost of implementing Common Core and Keystone Exams is \$300 million a year. The state has provided no money to implement these tests. This expense is an unfunded mandate that will force local school boards to raise school property taxes. At a time when many school districts are already raising taxes, cutting programs, increasing class sizes, and cutting teachers, this regulation would sock school districts through Pennsylvania with another unfunded mandate. The Philadelphia School District and several other schools districts are facing substantial budget deficits and teetering on the brink of insolvency, and the Keystone Exams mandate will only make the problem worse.

The financial problems facing our school districts prevent me from supporting the Keystone Exams and their \$65 million annual price tag. In addition to the cost, I am concerned the use of high stakes tests will unfairly penalize good students and good schools. Good students that may not take tests well will be labeled a failure and that label will follow them around their entire lives, and further harm our schools and educational system. If we have students failing the Keystone Exams, there is an alternative to pass high school. However, this alternative is another unfunded mandate. School districts will receive no additional funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to fund the graduation alternative.

While I am fully supportive of helping our students, I feel that the timing and lack of justifiable spending on this is wrong. I am asking that you do whatever you can to postpone these standards until our education funding shortfall needs and the policy problems with the Keystone exams can be addressed by the General Assembly.

If you wish to have me provide additional information, please let me know. I ask that you submit this into the official record on this issue. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Stack".
Senator Mike Stack
5th Senatorial District

MJS/jcg

COMMITTEES
BANKING & INSURANCE,
DEMOCRATIC CHAIR
AGING & YOUTH
COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY
JUDICIARY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
POLICY

APPOINTMENTS

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION TASK FORCE ON
DECEDENTS' ESTATES LAWS

2013 NOV 20 PM 3:27

RECEIVED
IRRC