



Senate of Pennsylvania

October 15, 2008

Honorable Edward G. Rendell, Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Re: Graduation Competency Assessments

Dear Governor Rendell:

It has come to our attention that the Pennsylvania Department of Education is proceeding with efforts to implement a standardized graduation competency assessment examination (“GCA”) in the Commonwealth. This is taking place despite the one-year moratorium contained in Act 61 (section 117, titled “Prohibition of Certain Regulations for the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year”), which you signed into law on July 9, 2008. That moratorium specifically prohibits the promulgation, approval, or proposal of “a regulation to change or establish high school graduation requirements.”

Notwithstanding the letter and the spirit of the law, the Department recently issued a request for proposal and is soliciting bids from companies to develop a model GCA. It is our understanding that this RFP, Solicitation 6100006516 – “Development of Graduation Competency Assessments, a Diagnostic Assessment Tool and Corresponding Model Curricula Materials and Resources,” represents approximately \$9 million in funding for the development of materials to be used by schools on a “voluntary basis.”

In addition to the concerns we have based on Act 61, the creation of a new state program is plainly imprudent given the serious economic situation facing Pennsylvania. Proceeding with the development of a GCA is fiscally irresponsible. Given the revenue shortfall we now face and will continue to face during this fiscal year, it is important to immediately cut costs as aggressively as possible. While this requires evaluating and adjusting the funding of existing programs, it must certainly also include curbing the funding of new initiatives such as the GCA.

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We respectfully request that you order the Department of Education to immediately cease any further activity related to the development or implementation of a GCA. Such leadership would proactively demonstrate your willingness to reduce the expected deficit and act responsibly on behalf of all Pennsylvanians.

Thank you in advance for your prompt concern and attention.

Sincerely,



Dominic Pileggi
Majority Leader



Jane Clare Orié
Majority Whip



James J. Rhoades
Chairman, Education Committee

JCO/bpl

cc: All Senators
Honorable Gerald L. Zahorchak, Secretary, Department of Education
Honorable James R. Roebuck, Jr., Chair, House Education Committee
Honorable Jess M. Stairs, Minority Chair, House Education Committee