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CHAIRMAN, REPUBLICAN POLICY
COMMITTEE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG
August 11, 2009

PA State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Members of the PA State Board of Education:

I write to you today from the perspective of a legislator who has aggressively been involved in the issue of graduation exams for the past 16 months in the General Assembly. At your upcoming board meeting, you face a serious decision on this issue – a vote on the so-called compromise that is before you.

As you consider this decision, please know that there are still significant questions in the General Assembly about this serious policy decision. Despite recent actions by a single committee, the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has unanimously spoken on this issue, they are opposed. Furthermore, when faced with a vote on this issue in the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, House leadership acted procedurally to avoid such a vote. There is only one reason they would avoid this vote.

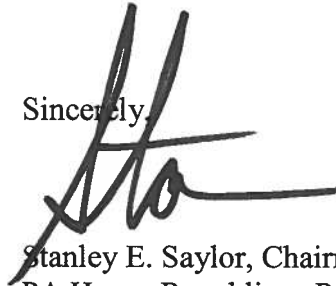
The course of action they chose to pursue in order to avoid this vote was to report SB 281, the legislation unanimously adopted by the PA Senate, out of the House Education Committee. Those who pursued this course of action will stand behind the negative recommendation attached to this legislation as the will of the committee. However, this negative recommendation is nothing more than a straw man in the legislative process. As a former standing committee chairman, let me be perfectly clear about what that negative recommendation means: NOTHING. If you will recall, SB 850 was voted out of the House Appropriation Committee with a negative recommendation and eventually approved by the General Assembly.

Do not examine what the House Education Committee vote on SB 281 was, examine what it was not. If a committee truly is opposed to a piece of legislation, they would call the legislation up and then vote it down. The House Education Committee did not do this because the votes were not there to defeat the legislation. The House Education Committee's vote on SB 281 was indeed a vote in favor of SB 281.

I remain opposed to the graduation exam proposal before you. I remain opposed to yet another new test and another layer of bureaucracy. I remain opposed to pursuing this proposal when questions regarding remediation and dropout rates have yet to be answered. I remain opposed to an unnecessary \$201 million commitment during this great recession – at a time when the Commonwealth faces a \$3.255 billion deficit.

Despite this opposition, it is important that I acknowledge what I stand opposed to is not important in this debate. What is important in this debate is what I stand for. I stand for the children of Pennsylvania – the children who will be treated unfairly under this proposal, the children who will be set back unknown degrees by this proposal, and the children who deserve better instruction, not more tests. I simply ask that you stand with me, for the children of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saylor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stanley E. Saylor, Chairman
PA House Republican Policy Committee

Cc. Hon. Paul Clymer, Chairman – House Education Committee
Hon. Jane Orie, Majority Whip – PA Senate