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House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

July 8, 2024

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
Aging & Older Adult Services

Agriculture & Rural Affairs

Education, Subcommittee on
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Labor & Industry, Subcommittee on Workers
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The Honorable George D. Bedwick
Chairman
Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street, 14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

RE: Proposed Regulation #6-354 – Academic Standards and Assessment

Dear Chairman Bedwick:

We submit for your consideration the following comments on the Proposed Regulation #6-354: Academic Standards and Assessment published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on June 15, 2024.

As members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Education Committee (the "Committee"), we take seriously our role of reviewing proposed regulations because the Committee is charged with legislative oversight of the Pennsylvania Department of Education ("PDE"). Following our thorough and thoughtful review, we feel it only prudent and incumbent upon us to state our concerns and objections to the following provisions in the proposed regulations:

- **Section 4.21(e)(8) regarding elementary education planned instruction for career education, including exposure to various *social-emotional learning* and employability skills, career awareness and learning experiences and the educational preparation necessary to achieve those experiences.**

The phrase "social-emotional learning" should be replaced with the phrase "interpersonal skills." Interpersonal skills are generally considered a broader category that incorporates social-emotional skills along with other practical communication and interaction abilities. Interpersonal skills encompass a wide range of abilities that allow people to interact effectively with others in various

settings, including communication (verbal and non-verbal), active listening, negotiation, leadership, teamwork, persuasion, relationship building, empathy, and assertiveness.

Appendix C.1. Academic Standards for Economics.

- **Nongovernmental Organizations** – Standards 6.4.6-8.F and 6.4.9-12.F:
Labor unions should be removed as an example of a nongovernmental economic institution. A labor union is a political organization that operates in an economic environment. Public-sector bargaining is inherently political in nature. Furthermore, unions engage in lobbying and political advocacy, and their positions during collective bargaining have political and civic consequences.

The better example of a nongovernmental economic institution would be a “business entity.”

- **Scarcity, Economic Choice, and Supply and Demand** – Standards 6.1.3-5.C, 6.1.6-8.C, 6.1.9-12.C, 6.1.6-8.D, 6.1.9-12.D, 6.2.3-5.D, 6.2.6-8.D, and 6.2.9-12.D:

There should be a clear connection made between the fundamental economic term of scarcity and the price of goods and services. Scarcity works in the free market by supply and demand, which can fluctuate the price of a good or service over time, when there is more or less of it available.

- **Monopolies** – Standard 6.2.9-12.C

Price controls mandated by the government are not an example of promoting free markets. Price controls lead to disruptions in the market, losses for producers, and noticeable change in quality. Price controls can lead to shortages, rationing, inferior product quality, and illegal markets.

- **Economic Indicators** – Standard 6.3.9-12.A

Fiscal Policy – Standards 6.3.6-8.C and 6.3.9-12.C

Economic Role of Government – Standards 6.3.6-8.G and 6.3.9-12.G

These standards equate government growth with private sector growth. Government does not create wealth, it redistributes it. To raise output or

employment with government spending, even in the short term, relies on flawed analysis. Using the Gross Domestic Product as an economic indicator is flawed because it counts government spending as much as it does private sector activity. These standards should present an analysis that government may use savings from spending cuts to then also cut taxes.

- **Money** – Standard 6.4.3-5.A

This standard should recognize and allow for the discussion of the advantages *and disadvantages* of using money instead of bartering. There are a number of reasons why a barter economy or being able to barter is beneficial. There may be times where cash is not readily available, but goods or services are. Bartering allows individuals to get what they need with what they already own or the services they can provide to someone else.

Appendix D-1. – Academic Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences.

- **Action Plans** – Standard 11.6.6-8.A

The use of the acronym FCCLA should be clarified as Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, and the planning procedure should be listed as: identify concerns, set a goal, form a plan, act, and follow up.

Appendix E-1. – Academic Standards for Career Education and Work.

- **Oral and written communication**– Standards 13.2.K-2.B, 13.2.3-5.B, 13.2.6-8.B, and 13.2.9-12.B

We have a concern about this section and its impact on individuals with intellectual disabilities. Individuals who are navigating life with conditions such as autism or other attention or social disorders will have a significant disadvantage when assessed under the proposed standards. We are confident that in no way did the State Board of Education intend to imply or deem individuals with intellectual disabilities as unemployable or lacking the proposed employability standards or skills, but it should consider those students' ability to use context clues to identify how communication varies.

- **Teamwork and Collaboration** – Standards 13.2.K-2.C, 13.2.3-5.C, 13.2.6-8.C, and 13.2.9-12.C

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The standards should be consistent across all grade levels and adopt the language used for grades 9-12—“various perspectives.”

Appendix F. – Academic Standards for Personal Finance.

- **Financial mindset and behaviors** – Standards 17.1.6-8.D and 17.1.9-12.D
Investing risk tolerance – Standard 17.4.9-12.K

The use of the phrase “behavioral biases” should be clarified. For example, if it is referring to psychological influences on investing such as loss aversion, consensus bias, and experiential bias, those terms should be explained in the standards so that it’s clear to educators.

Finally, this letter represents our concerns at this time and should not limit us from providing future comments or concerns regarding Proposed Regulation #6-354.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns with this proposed regulation and we respectfully ask for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Barbara Gleim
199th House District

Representative Joseph D’Orsie
47th House District

Representative Stephenie Scialabba
12th House District