



TO: Honorable Members of the PA House Education Committee

FROM: Sam Denisco, Vice President, Government Affairs

DATE: Nov. 16, 2011

RE: Support H.B. 1980 - Teacher Evaluation Legislation

On behalf of its thousands of statewide member businesses of all sizes and crossing all industry sectors, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry urges your support of H.B. 1980 and Amendment 06296. This legislation would provide for a teacher evaluation system which incorporates both traditional classroom observation methods as well as student achievement into teacher rating system. More importantly, it would provide teachers with critical feedback needed to continue improving performance in the classroom.

In 1995, Pennsylvania spent \$13 billion on public education. Today, we spend \$26 billion. This represents an increase of \$8.5 billion -- more than the rate of inflation. Yet at the same time, census data tells us that student enrollment had declined by 10 percent while the number of teachers has increased by thousands. Despite these potential advantages, Pennsylvania has continued to see declining test scores and increased dropout rates. These facts clearly indicate a poor return on investment in education. In fact, in 2007 national *Leaders and Laggards* report, Pennsylvania received a D and ranked 35th among all states for its return on investment relative to its per-pupil spending.

Teacher evaluations would serve as a tool to reverse this trend. Pennsylvania has not addressed the evaluation section of the public school code in forty years, however, recent studies and trends indicate that imminent change is necessary. Through the incorporation of Representative Clymer's amendment, evaluations would be delayed until 2014. In addition, the amendment clearly establishes that 50 percent of the evaluation be based on student achievement. It is not the intent of this requirement solely to rely on standardized tests. Schools can incorporate multiple measures of student achievement. This includes statewide assessments, student growth data through the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), and other measures of student achievement that would be chosen at the local level from a list compiled by the department following the next phase of the pilot program. Should they choose to, schools can even incorporate parent or

student surveys as a portion of this 50 percent. The other 50 percent of the evaluation would be based on traditional teacher practices.

Drastic change is needed to reform this flawed system. At present, Pennsylvania's education system provides teachers with no opportunity to receive feedback on their work performance, hence they are unable to make improvements. In the business community, we recognize the importance of setting goals and benchmarks as a way to improve overall performance. The same concepts applied to education would help improve the system to the benefit of all students. The PA Chamber views this legislation as a step toward helping to bridge the gap that currently exists between employer needs and employee skill sets. Through enactment of this legislation, teachers will be able to continuously enhance their teaching skills and in turn, students will benefit. We urge you to support H.B. 1950 with Representative Clymer's amendment.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 717 720-5580 or e-mail me at sdenisco@pachamber.org.