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November 2, 2011

The Honorable Paul Clymer, Chairman
PA House Education Committee
216 Ryan Office Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2145

Dear Chairman Clymer:

I write on behalf of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry to express support of H.B. 1980. This legislation would incorporate student performance into the teacher evaluation process.

In 1995, Pennsylvania spent \$13 billion on public education. Today, the state spends \$28 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. In fact, recent studies indicate that Pennsylvania ranked 35th among all states as determined by students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—an independent measuring stick also known as the Nation's Report Card—relative to per-pupil spending. This clearly demonstrates a poor return on our investment.

Despite this troubling trend, teachers as a whole continue to be rated positively during their evaluations. Currently, Pennsylvania ranks teachers as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and during the 2009-10 school year, 99.4 percent of teachers were rated as satisfactory. In its *2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook*, the National Council on Teacher Quality gave the state of Pennsylvania an overall "D" for state policies focused on teachers. Specifically, the state received grades on its ability to perform in the following areas: delivering well-prepared teachers: D+; expanding the pool of teachers: C-; identifying effective teachers: D; retaining effective teachers: D+; and exiting ineffective teachers: D.

At present, Pennsylvania's education system provides teachers with no opportunity to receive constructive feedback on their work performance. Moreover, the current system fails to hold teachers accountable and fails to incorporate student achievement. 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 the committee to consider these bills when the House returns to session. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samuel Denisco". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Samuel Denisco
Vice President, Government Affairs

cc: Chairman James Roebuck