



To: Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature

From: Susan Carty, President
Pennsylvania League of Women Voters

Date: June 22, 2015

RE: Pennsylvania League of Women Voters High-Stakes Testing Position Supports Delay of Keystone Exams as Graduation Requirements

At our June 2015 state convention in Pittsburgh, the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters voted concurrence to update our education position to include high-stakes testing . **Based on the below position, the League supports SB 880, which would delay the use of the Keystone Exams as graduation requirements until 2018-19, and SB 838, which would place a moratorium on the use of the exams as graduation requirements.**

Both SB 880 and SB 838 recognize the unintended consequences of the use of the Keystone Exams as graduation requirements on our students and teachers. In addition, both pieces of legislation allow for thoughtful and timely review of our current assessment system by all stakeholders. **The Pennsylvania League of Women Voters respectfully encourages swift legislative action on delaying the use of Keystone Exams as high-stakes graduation requirements .**

Pennsylvania League of Women Voters Position: Assessment and High-Stakes Testing

Within our schools, assessment of student learning should include measures **other than** standardized tests. Such assessments provide a useful tool for

- monitoring academic progress
- helping teachers modify instruction
- Identifying students who need additional support, and
- Informing placement decisions.

Standardized tests should be developed in a transparent manner with a clearly designated purpose and should be normed on populations similar to the ones to be tested. They should be

aligned with state-adopted academic standards. Such assessments and their consequences should be modified based on needs of students with disabilities and those who are English-language learners. Standardized tests may be useful in

- comparing student performance across schools, districts, and states
- measuring overall academic progress and achievement within and across groups
- monitoring student academic growth, and
- promoting consistent content in subject areas.

However, standardized assessments should **not** be used for high-stakes determinations such as grade promotion or graduation requirements. They should **not** be used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of teachers or administration.

Funding should **not** be related only to standardized test performance. All schools should have adequate funding to enable their students to be successful.

The League believes that high-stakes testing negatively impacts student well-being, curricular programs, district budgets, and instructional time. These negative effects may include aspects such as student and teacher stress, a narrowing of curriculum to spend more time on tested subjects, lack of availability of student electives because of focus on tested subjects, demands on district budgets for testing and remediation, and loss of instructional time to test preparation and administration.

Information obtained through testing should be made available to students, parents and schools of attendance. Without student and/or parent permission, individual student data should **not** be available to colleges, employers and the general public.

The League believes that legislation and policy regarding education assessments need to be carefully formulated to reduce potential litigation in areas such as special education, parental rights, and privacy concerns.