



PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATE

CC: GOVERNOR TOM WOLF

FROM: JERRY T. JORDAN, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

RE: OPPOSITION TO SB 756

JUNE 21, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jerry', is positioned to the right of the 'FROM' line.

An additional legislative item of concern for the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers is **SB 756**, which we **OPPOSE**, as it would have negative impacts on educators and schoolchildren.

The legislation, while titled as the elimination of Keystone Exams, in fact has significantly wider reaching implications.

While SB 756 does provide for the elimination of Keystone Exams, it appears to do so only to replace them with the Preliminary Scholarship Aptitude Test (PSAT) as a way of measuring academic achievement and rating teachers. Instead of replacing the Keystone with another standardized test that more often than not, shows very little about a student's actual academic and personal growth, nor that of their educators, we call for the holistic overhaul of a flawed evaluation system.

The PSAT purportedly measures college readiness, and as such, measuring student "achievement" by this narrow standard is problematic. Additionally, the PSAT is operated and administered by a commercial enterprise for which income is generated, in large measure, by the administration of exams like the PSAT. It is inappropriate for the Pennsylvania General Assembly to mandate the use of public school tax dollars to prop up a commercial entity whose reason for being (PSAT and SAT administration) is being rejected in a wholesale fashion by the colleges and universities.

That this bill is being packaged as the elimination of Keystone Exams, while it simply inserts another standardized test in its place, and in fact increases the stakes for standardized test implications, is very troubling.

SB 756 moves us in the wrong direction in terms of teacher evaluation. Instead of addressing the significant problems with Act 82, the bill instead puts more weight on standardized tests in evaluating educators.

The current (albeit quite flawed) evaluation metric calls for 50% of an educator's evaluation to be based on observation. SB 756 in its current amended form calls for the reduction of that weight to 40%.

Overall, the rubric changes in the following ways:

- Reduction of observation weight from 50% to 40%.
- Increase in weight of standardized test results to 20% (from 15%).

- Increase in weight of district specific requirements (such as extremely flawed Value Added Measures) to 30% (from 15%).
- Removal of building level data evaluation (from 15%).
- Implementation of parent/student surveys (to 10%).

There are a number of flaws with each of these changes, including the subjectivity of survey results as well as the potential for 30% of an evaluation to be measured by what has been written off as “junk science” (VAM).

While certainly appealing in its name, *this bill does nothing to ensure that we are educating every child to reach their greatest potential*. Instead, it is a way of realigning an already punitive evaluation model. We have a number of proactive ways we believe that teacher evaluation can be modified, and this bill fails to meet the mark. **We are opposed to SB 756.**

Please refer to our June 15, 2017 memo for a full description of our current legislative positions.

Summary of PFT Legislative Positions: June 2017

Bill/Legislative Item	PFT Position
Governor’s \$100M increase in basic education funding	SUPPORT
Governor’s \$100M increase in special education funding	SUPPORT
SB 76 [Elimination of property taxes]	OPPOSED
SB 166 [Paycheck deception]	OPPOSED
SB 167 [Paycheck deception]	OPPOSED
SB 168 [Open bargaining]	OPPOSED
SB 228 [Economic furlough]	OPPOSED
SB 229 [Elimination of guaranteed sick leave for educators]	OPPOSED
SB 494 [Prohibition of union leave]	OPPOSED
SB 555 [Fair share tax plan]	SUPPORT
<i>SB 756 [Evaluation changes]</i>	OPPOSED
SB 777 [Shale tax; pending introduction]	SUPPORT
HB 97 [Charter ‘reform’]	OPPOSED
HB 164 [Prohibition of union leave]	OPPOSED
HB 250 [EITC expansion]	OPPOSED
HB 438 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 857 [Amends private academic schools]	OPPOSED
HB 991 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 975 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 1075 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 1495 [Layoffs]	OPPOSED

To be added to our legislative updates list serve, or for more information, contact:

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