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May 27, 2003

To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Lucille Lusk

We offered amendments to AB 179 in the Assembly to accomplish 3 major purposes:

1. To bring the mathematics portion of the state proficiency exam in line with what *every* pupil needs to know to graduate from high school;
2. To keep the requirement that pupils pass the proficiency exam to obtain a high school diploma; and
3. To establish a reasonable standard for a pupil to qualify for a Millennium Scholarship based on a college entrance exam, specifically that the pupil achieve a passing score on the ACT or SAT as determined by the Board of Regents.

The Assembly Ways & Means Committee responded to the first of these requests by including a definition of the basic math proficiencies that every student needs to graduate to include addition, subtraction, division, multiplication, fractions and decimals [Sec 15 (d), p. 21, lines 27-30], and by calling for an audit of the questions on the math proficiency exam to determine, among other things, whether questions are included from courses of study that are not required courses for graduation [Sec. 15 (f), p. 21, lines 31-25].

The Assembly restored in the bill the requirement that pupils pass the proficiency exams in reading and writing. They chose to delay for a 2-year period the requirement to pass the math portion, with the expectation that the audit of that portion will be completed and the math portion of the exam will be validated by that time.

The Assembly did not choose to base the standard for qualifying for a Millennium Scholarship on the ACT or SAT. Instead, they raised the GPA that would be required incrementally to reach 3.25 by 2007 [Sec. 11, p. 18, lines 22-32], and raised the GPA required in college to maintain the scholarship to 2.6. While this is a bit of improvement, we believe the more sensible standard for a college scholarship is a college entrance exam, and ask you to consider that possibility.

One of the other provisions included in AB 179 is to require that the pupil retake *only* the portion of the exam that he has not previously passed [Sec. 9 (f), p. 15, lines 7-10], since that is the only one that is in dispute. We ask you to consider passing this common sense provision regardless of what else survives or does not survive in AB 179.

Please give AB 179 as it is now written serious consideration, and if you can see a way to do it that you also consider adding the ACT/SAT standard for a Millennium Scholarship. Thank you.

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