



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

May 18, 2011

The Honorable Mark Mustio  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Room 432, Irvis Office Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2044

Dear Representative Mustio:

Thank you for sharing your constituents' concerns for education in Pennsylvania and for meeting with my staff to discuss these points further. I have reviewed these comments with my staff and appreciate the consideration that was made in constructing these ideas. As we are all aware of our difficult economic position, we need such ideas to help us persevere in delivering quality educational services.

In reviewing some of the points made in your letter dated, April 4, 2011, regarding K-12 education funding, I believe that some of these issues must be addressed at the local level. For instance:

- **School transportation.** Decisions such as where bus stops are located and establishing bus routes are determined at the local level. The state does not have involvement in setting these parameters.
- **Textbooks.** The decision of which textbooks to use and the ordering of new textbooks are made by each school district's administration.
- **Construction.** School construction funding and plans are decisions made by local school boards. The state becomes involved only when school districts request to be reimbursed through our Planning and Construction Workbook program.

There are also some points that are currently being reviewed by the Commonwealth as possible avenues to better provide educational services to our students and to pursue cost savings to districts, such as:

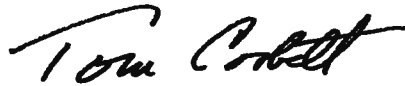
- **4-day school weeks.** The Department of Education is reviewing the logistics of such a change and legal implications, in part, to consider whether this will still meet the requirements for students' time in the classroom.
- **Sharing services or school district cooperation agreements.** We are willing to explore the opportunities that would allow school districts to voluntarily share administrators, resources, equipment, etc. as a cost savings. The Department of Education's staff is available to help any school district with questions on how it may proceed under current law.
- **Extracurricular fees and private partnerships.** In addition to the core academic services that we must provide students in Pennsylvania, there are additional benefits for students participating in extracurricular or athletic services. In order to help support these activities, many schools are reaching out to families and private industry to help offset the cost to

- providing these extracurricular activities. It is our hope that these efforts will help to continue these services to students that are interested in participating in them.
- **Energy usage.** The Department of Education does not have guidance or mandates for schools to follow on energy conservation. We do encourage schools and school districts to use their best judgment in how to maximize their use of utilities and have created a website to help them at [www.pathwaystogreenschools.org](http://www.pathwaystogreenschools.org). Schools can also save money by joining an energy purchasing consortium. There are 20 Intermediate Units (IU) that operate or participate in an IU-operated energy purchasing consortium. Interested districts should contact their local IU for additional information.
  - **Group health care.** We are willing to explore how a group health care program for school employees would operate and how it would work programmatically. We would need to be sensitive to how collective bargaining agreements are structured and offer this as a voluntary option for interested parties.
  - **Charter schools.** Charter schools and cyber charter schools are parts of the public school system and funded as such. We want to make sure that these schools are as effective as possible in delivering a quality education to our students through accountability measures. We will be addressing the funding mechanisms for both charter and cyber charter schools to ensure fairness.
  - **Education funding.** Education funding to school districts is distributed through the basic education formula. There are various factors included in this formula, including considerations for poverty, student attendance and English as a second language. Through this formula we are making every effort to address fairness issues.

I recognize the concerns that were made in regard to the natural gas industry and encourage your constituents to consider the taxes and fees that these companies have paid already to the state and local government. Some studies and analyses found that state Sales Tax, Realty Transfer Tax, and Personal Income Taxes were notably higher in areas that had Marcellus Shale production than in areas that did not have production. These tax collections not only have a positive impact on state revenues but also help local municipalities and school districts. Our Department of Environmental Protection is working to ensure that our water supply and environment is protected as this industry continues to grow.

I sincerely appreciate the constructive suggestions that have been made by you and your constituents. I look forward to the positive dialogue and policy discussions that we will have as we move forward in addressing the challenges ahead. I am confident that as we all work together we will be able to have a stronger Commonwealth and better educational system for our students. Please continue to engage myself and my staff in the coming weeks of this budget and the years ahead.

Sincerely,



TOM CORBETT  
Governor

cc: The Honorable Ronald Tomalis