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April 18, 2017

*By electronic mail*

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: AB 830 (Kalra) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member O'Donnell:

Public Advocates supports AB 830 (Kalra) to repeal the High School Exit Examination (HSEE) and the requirement to pass the HSEE as a condition of graduation.

Public Advocates is a civil rights legal organization that has served as a key voice for educational equity in landmark cases such as *Serrano v. Priest* and *Williams v. California*. Our commitment to “making rights real” has shaped our vision of building an educational system that provides meaningful opportunities to learn so that *all* students are prepared for college *and* careers.

HSEE is a high-stakes assessment. Students who failed it were more likely to be low-income, students of color, English learners and students with disabilities. Some were denied high school diplomas even after meeting their school districts’ graduation requirements. Public Advocates’ position then and now is that a high stakes assessment for graduation is not fair unless a meaningful opportunity to learn the material to be tested is provided the student before a diploma can be denied. Despite litigation and years of advocacy against the unfairness of using HSEE, California continued denying diplomas to students who failed HSEE, even after taking remedial courses over and over and retaking the tests long after their class graduated at adult school or community college so they could get a high school diploma.

Longitudinal research from Stanford University demonstrated that the test was not having its intended effect of boosting student performance

but was keeping tens of thousands of otherwise-qualified students—disproportionately low-performing girls and students of color—from graduating each year.<sup>1</sup>

With the historic enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its new school accountability system, California has adopted a multiple measures accountability system that does not rely solely on standardized test scores. The Legislature and Governor wisely included the other elements of a good education system in the 8 State Priorities. (Educ. Code Sec. 52060) which require Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to use their LCFF funding to address. The 8 State Priorities include assessments of the Common Core State Standards, which California adopted in 2010. HSEE is aligned to old state standards and is not a valid assessment of the curriculum being provided in classrooms today.

For these reasons, we support AB 830 to repeal the high school exit exam. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any question about our position.

Sincerely,



Liz Guillen  
Director of Legislative & Community Affairs  
(916) 803-5596 – cell

Cc: Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Assembly Member Ash Kalra

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<sup>1</sup> Reardon, S., *Effects of the California High School Exit Exam on Student's Schooling Trajectories.* James Irvine Foundation (2009).