



May 19, 2008

The Honorable David J. Steil
The Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Main Capitol Building, Room 49 East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2031

Re: House Bill 2369, P.N. 3435 – Child Labor

Representative Steil:

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association would like to express its general support of the direction House Bill 2369 takes in updating Pennsylvania's Child Labor Law. The association, however, has some concerns with the present draft and requests that they be resolved in committee before the legislation advances.

Our primary concern is Section 14, which authorizes minors to be employed in work experience and career exploration programs and apprenticeships. It is unclear whether this section covers career and technical centers (CTC), particularly "cooperative education" programs that place students into entry-level jobs relating to their focus of study. Without clarification, it is difficult to determine how such programs will be treated, since many of the participating students are at off-site work locations throughout the day. Moreover, this bill prohibits minors from working in establishments with hazardous equipment, when a number of students in CTC-approved cooperative education programs use such devices as part of their on-the-job training. An ambiguous statute will only deter participating employers from accepting students for fear of legal liabilities. In order to fully prepare the next generation of Pennsylvania's workforce, whose advanced training will help fuel the state's economy, this legislation should explicitly include CTC programs and exempt cooperative education students from the hazardous equipment restriction.

These concerns notwithstanding, House Bill 2369 provides school districts with the authority necessary for ensuring that a student's education is not interrupted. It also streamlines the paperwork process for districts by directing the Department of Labor and Industry to produce and distribute the various required forms, instead of the Department of Education.

Nevertheless, PSBA has not had sufficient opportunity to seek input from school districts that process relatively large numbers of employed students. The House Labor Relations Committee, therefore, needs to reach out to those districts before moving House Bill 2369. PSBA reserves the right to raise additional concerns in the future if any arise as the legislation progresses.

We look forward to working with you and your staff on addressing our concerns.

Sincerely,

Timothy Allwein
Assistant Executive Director

Beth L. Winters
Director of Legislative Services

cc: Vicki DiLeo, Executive Director for the Majority, House Labor Relations Committee
Bruce Hanson, Executive Director for the Minority, House Labor Relations Committee