

cc: Mr. Campbell

DICK THORNBURGH
2540 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
APARTMENT 405
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

February 28, 2011

Honorable Tom Corbett
2035 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Dear Tom:

In your inaugural address you said, "I believe in Pennsylvania and I believe in Pennsylvanians. And in those beliefs is a certainty that the best way to embrace innovation – the best way to make us competitive – is to make us competitive in education." Many Pennsylvanians are dedicated to excellence in education as well.

I am writing to bring your attention to the loss of the Pennsylvania Governor's Schools of Excellence, which were eliminated by your predecessor in the state budget crisis two years ago.

In 1982, our administration established the Governor's School for the Sciences (PGSS) summer program, hosted at Carnegie Mellon University. PGSS joined the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts in enabling talented Pennsylvania students to pursue advanced summer study in specialized fields not available in their own high schools. (Several other Governor's Schools of Excellence later joined the fold.) For 26 years PGSS taught thousands of inspired and enthusiastic students, most of whom describe PGSS as a transformative, eye-opening experience. By taking challenging courses in such topics as molecular biology, organic chemistry, special relativity, combinatorial mathematics, and artificial intelligence, these students became inspired to take on great challenges in college and beyond. Many cite their exposure to world-class scientists and laboratories at PGSS as key in their paths to leadership in a variety of fields, including materials science, laser physics, microeconomics, cancer medicine, and patent law.

In 2009, the Pennsylvania Governor's Schools of Excellence were eliminated in the midst of a budget crisis. In response, a dedicated group of PGSS alumni has joined together to restore the school. They have formed a non-profit corporation, the PGSS Alumni Association, Inc., and have begun fundraising to reinstate the program by 2012. The alumni are seeking public and private grants and donations, in an effort to make the program available to boys and girls who qualify, regardless of their families' economic status, just as it was from 1982 to 2008.

The PGSS Alumni Association is passionate about the positive impact the program had on their lives. Their website, www.pgssalumni.org, includes hundreds of testimonials expressing deep appreciation for the opportunity to participate in such a challenging and empowering program. This was clearly a special program, and the Commonwealth would do well to explore ways to bring it back.

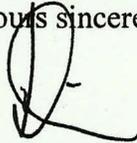
At a time when most education dollars in America are aimed at raising minimum student scores, we risk diluting our standards of excellence. PGSS offered the highest level of instruction by engaging students and teachers in the joy and excitement of humanity's great scientific

challenges. This program should continue, and should serve as a model for other states to develop the talents of young scientists across the country. Many policymakers have identified "STEM" (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) as critical subjects for America's economy. Scientific discovery and technological innovation strengthen our state and country.

I remain as committed to education now as I was in 1982 when we first started PGSS. Please help to revive the Pennsylvania's Governor's School for the Sciences, and encourage our youth to pursue science careers beyond their wildest dreams. This is a key investment in our future.

I encourage you to meet with the PGSS Alumni Association to talk about ways your administration might work together with this group of volunteers. They wish to make it possible for the alumni to repay the Commonwealth's investment in them, in order make the program available to future generations of Pennsylvania students.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Dick Thornburgh". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "D" and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Dick Thornburgh