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August 21, 2020

Honorable Pedro Rivera, Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Secretary Rivera:

Please accept my congratulations on your new position as President of the Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology. Your dedication and service to this Commonwealth has been an inspiration to many, and I wish you nothing but the best in your new endeavors.

Unfortunately, not every public official believes in serving their communities as you have so ably served this Commonwealth. Recently I read of yet another example involving the Penn Hills School Board, which voted to waste taxpayer dollars by choosing a boiler replacement contract that is more expensive than the one recommended by the state's financial recovery officer, Dan Matsook, and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO). Mr. Matsook said that the district is spending at least \$500,000 more in taxpayer money that was not budgeted and that the district is missing out on even more long-term savings that would be afforded by the other boilers.

Sadly, this is not an isolated incident of financial mismanagement by the Penn Hills School Board. In fact, earlier this month the Penn Hills School Board voted to allow Mobile Health Services (MHS) – which is partially owned by the district's solicitor, Bruce Dice – to perform infrared temperature checks on students and staff at a cost of more than \$5,000 per week. The neighboring Gateway School District declined a similar offer from MHS, with members of that school board citing a variety of reasons including that their solicitor, also Bruce Dice, partially owns MHS. While the potential conflict of interest did not go unnoticed by Gateway School Board members, it appears to have slipped by members of the Penn Hills School Board. Adding insult to injury, recent news reports have stated that the deal between MHS and the Penn Hills School District does not even impose requirements on MHS. Instead, the agreement states that the company "can" provide certain services, not that they "shall" provide certain services.

The Penn Hills School Board's reckless mismanagement of taxpayer funds directly hurts taxpayers and the children of the district. After the vote to waste over 500,000 taxpayer dollars on the boiler contract, school board president Erin Vecchio, said, "I answer to these taxpayers, not Harrisburg...Nobody's going to tell us how to vote, period." But Ms. Vecchio is not answering to the taxpayers, who do not want to be burdened with the heavy property taxes that inevitably come with the spendthrift decisions of the School Board as led by its president. Nor is the school board listening to the advice of the state and the state's recovery officer.

Accordingly, I ask that you direct your department to review the recent financial decisions of the school board. Perhaps the state may need to take drastic action – such as receivership – to mitigate the damage that has been done and to prevent future mishaps from occurring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony DeLuca".

Tony DeLuca, Chair
House Insurance Committee

TD/jk

cc: Dr. Nancy Hines, *Penn Hills Superintendent*