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House of Representatives  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 25, 2012

**TO:** All House Members

**FROM:** Representative Patrick Harkins *P.J.H.*

**SUBJECT:** Introduction of Legislation – Removal of Derogatory Terms from the Public School Code of 1949

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In the near future, I intend to introduce legislation to remove derogatory terms from the Public School Code of 1949. Removing these terms will allow children with disabilities to be seen for who they are as a person and not for their disability.

This legislation will bring about awareness that it is long overdue. The continued use of such words as crippled, defective, disturbed, handicapped and retarded is unacceptable. The use of such words is demeaning, because it perpetuates the idea that impaired individuals are incapable or stupid. Removing these words from the Public School Code will allow students with disabilities to be seen as children who are competent and capable of contributing to our classrooms and society in so many ways.

As lawmakers, it is our duty to remove such derogatory words from the Public School Code as the first step to removing such a persistent stigma regarding the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's children with disabilities. Furthermore, as state representatives, it is our duty to lead by example and work to eliminate these words from our everyday speech. If you would like to join me in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Terra Heilman at [theilman@pahouse.net](mailto:theilman@pahouse.net).

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