

**Testimony of Eugene W. Hickok before the Education
Committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives**

August 18, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am honored to be here with you. It has been a long time since I had the honor and privilege of working with the members of this assembly, the members of the Pennsylvania Senate, and Governor Ridge. From 1995 until the spring of 2001, together we accomplished a great many things in education reform in Pennsylvania. We introduced charter schools, "Link-to-Learn," higher academic standards for students, higher qualifications to future teachers, greater accountability for the Commonwealth's schools, strategies for turning around troubled districts, education investment tax credits, and much more.

All of this was possible because we recognized the need to work together – to get beyond our partisan political differences – when it came to achieving real education reform.

I look back on those days as some of the most rewarding of my professional life. To this day I watch with great interest what is happening in Pennsylvania education. I no longer reside in the Commonwealth. But in many ways my heart still does.

Today you are again engaged in serious conversations about the future of education in Pennsylvania. The state of the economy, nationally and here in the Commonwealth, makes this education conversation even more meaningful and important, as well as perhaps even more difficult. But in my

opinion, you are doing the right thing. You are recognizing the fact that tomorrow's economy – nationally and in Pennsylvania – will be shaped in large part by the education our citizens receive. It is education that will shape the opportunities and ideas that will define our future. It is education that will determine how competitive we will be in an ever more competitive world. It is education that will determine whether or not America will continue to define its own destiny or must bend to the decisions and desires of others.

I have been away from public service for some time now. I have had the chance to reflect on a great many things. I have tried to contribute to the public discussion of education reform through publications and presentations. It is in that spirit – a spirit of reflection born of experience, optimism and concern – that I look forward to our conversation today.

One last point: I am convinced we need to embrace a sense of urgency and be willing to think differently – perhaps dramatically differently – in order to begin to make sure that education in America and in Pennsylvania is up to the challenges of the modern era.

Thank you, again, for the invitation to be with you today.