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July 11, 2024

Dr. Katie Jenner  
Secretary of Education  
Indiana Department of Education  
Government Center North, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
100 N. Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The Honorable Chris Lowery  
Commissioner  
Indiana Commission for Higher Education  
101 West Ohio Street, Suite 550  
Indianapolis, IN 46204-1971

Dear Secretary Jenner and Commissioner Lowery:

After meeting with both faculty and local school corporation leadership, I wanted to share Indiana State University's concerns about the current version of the high school diploma redesign. It seems there may be a disconnect between the proposal and the HOPE Agenda Goals as set by the ICHE, which include increasing Indiana's college-going rate.

Our goal is to ensure that students who enroll at Indiana State are academically prepared enough to graduate. We don't have any concerns about the current diploma options. If a high school student chooses one of the less rigorous proposed diploma options, their ability to complete the coursework required to achieve a college degree may be more difficult. We know that high school performance, both in terms of grades and the difficulty of the student's curriculum, is a good indicator of success in college. If students are less prepared, they'll require remediation, which is costly for us and their families.

While the tiered seal approach currently contemplated is well intentioned, it may cause confusion for prospective college students and their families, especially first-generation students. At Indiana State, about half of our freshmen each year are first-generation students, and we are particularly concerned about the impact this proposal could have on their understanding of college preparation and decisions about higher education. We are proud to rank in the top 15% nationally for social mobility, something that comes from our mission to many traditionally under-served populations. Unless higher education representatives have the ability and resources to assist school corporations to help younger students (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade) navigate the diploma options, the result may be that fewer high school seniors, especially those from disadvantaged groups, will pursue higher education at Indiana State University and elsewhere.

Please let me know if you have questions or require clarification.

Sincerely,

Mike Godard, PhD  
President