



May 19, 2017

Members of the House

Re: House Bill 1213

Dear Representative,

On behalf of school leaders across the state, **we request your opposition to House Bill 1213.** House Bill 1213 will unfairly increase property taxes for homeowners while providing an unjustified windfall to commercial properties.

House Bill 1213 severely restricts the right of school districts to engage in assessment appeals, a process that is preserved by statute and acknowledged by case law as necessary to ensuring the uniformity required by the PA Constitution. The bill also changes how properties are assessed, allowing use of the “dark store theory” of valuation. This theory ignores logic, assessment law and legal precedent to promote valuing thriving and successful commercial properties as though they are nothing more than vacant buildings. This change could reduce the value of some commercial properties by 25-50% or more.

While this bill provides a potentially huge windfall to businesses, it is at the direct expense of *all other* property owners in a school district. Homeowners will see their property taxes increase dramatically to account for the commercial properties that are purposefully undervalued as a direct result of this legislation.

We acknowledge that Pennsylvania’s system of property assessment and reassessment is broken and in dire need of attention. Instead of addressing a mere symptom of the dysfunctional underlying system, energy should be focused on comprehensive assessment reform that includes uniform countywide reassessment. Until then, we ask that you oppose House Bill 1213, which allows businesses to game the broken system to the detriment of homeowners, school districts and all local governments.

We appreciate your time and attention to this issue. Please feel free to reach out to any of our associations if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools
Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials
Pennsylvania Principals Association
Pennsylvanian School Boards Association
Pennsylvania State Education Association