STATE OF ARIZONA

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May 16, 2006

The Honorable Ken Bennett
President
Arizona State Senate
1700 West Washington Street
Senate Office Building
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: Senate Bill 1443: AIMS test; alternative graduation requirement

Dear President Bennett:

Today, I signed Senate Bill 1443 into law. It makes sense to consider grades in assessing a student's readiness for high school graduation. After all, institutions of higher education and employers consider grades for college entry and employment.

Arizonans should understand, however, that neither Senate Bill 1443 nor the AIMS test itself will move our high schools into the 21st Century without a more significant state commitment to improving education quality.

If we are serious about ensuring that every student is ready for college or work, we must: improve the rigor of high school course work; provide for end-of-course testing requirements; increase teacher pay and opportunities for professional development; and upgrade the data systems our schools use so that information regarding students is available to teachers in a timely manner. We must also see to it that all of our K-8 students are prepared for a rigorous high school curriculum, not just some of our students.

I have formed a P-20 Council, made up of parents, educators, legislators and business leaders to discuss the serious issues of education redesign. I look forward to their recommendations and to working with the Legislature in addressing these substantive issues in future legislative sessions.

Yours very truly,

Janet Napolitano
Governor

JN:BH/jm
cc: The Honorable Jim Weiers
The Honorable Thayer Verschoor