



## **Senate Testimony on HB33 June 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB33. My name is Abbie Sigmon, and I am the incoming executive director of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC). (For more information about gifted education, please see the [2022 State of Gifted Education](#)).

Gifted education funding in Ohio has gone through multiple revisions over the last decade. The current formula is based on a 2018 gifted cost study whose recommendations were largely incorporated into the Cupp-Patterson funding bill. These provisions are just now being implemented and current amendments to HB33 have removed any sunset language - of which we are extremely thankful. OAGC recommends that the Ohio Senate retain the amendments as passed by the Ohio House. These provisions and amendments are incredibly important as gifted children are the only children not required to be served according to their needs in Ohio. If Ohio policymakers are truly committed to workforce development, requiring gifted services needs to be an integral part of the equation.

### Maintain the Accountability and Transparency of Gifted Funds, Services, and Staffing

With regard to improvements to gifted education funding, our most urgent request to the Ohio House was to maintain the gifted accountability and transparency measures that were included in the last biennium. Without the House support, many of these provisions would have sunset. As critical as funding is, accountability for the use of gifted funds is equally as important. With accountability and transparency language maintained in the House version of HB33, OAGC asks that the Ohio Senate retain that language.

Unfortunately, the most recent HB33 Substitute Bill adopted in the Senate has removed critical accountability language. Approved under the House, the allocation of gifted funds would only be permitted for the identification of gifted students, gifted coordinator services, gifted intervention specialist services, and gifted professional development. However, if passed in its current form, HB33 would allow school districts to spend gifted funds in the formula on anything they want with impunity. As Section 3317.021 (J) is currently written, , “other service providers approved by the department of education“ would be allowed to receive funds specifically allocated to the service of gifted students. OAGC is incredibly concerned with this language and the inherent funding control this gives the department of education. Gifted funds should be spent on gifted services. Again, we ask that the Senate remove that language and keep the department of education accountable for the funds allotted for gifted students in Ohio.

Caitlin Hughes, a Gifted Coordinator at Fairfield County ESC provided this quote to underscore the importance of funding accountability:

*Funding accountability is extremely important for smaller districts, especially those in rural settings, where gifted education is often overshadowed by other district and state initiatives and mandates. Many of these districts cannot, or choose not to, employ Gifted Intervention Specialists on staff, so ensuring that other gifted funding is solely spent on identification services, professional development, and selecting appropriate supporting curricular materials for gifted students is essential. These are the only guarantees that our gifted learners are in appropriately challenging regular education classrooms, and when districts are able to allocate these gifted funds towards other district needs, our gifted learners' growth and trajectories ultimately suffer.*

#### Support for Merit Scholarships

Additionally, OAGC also welcomes the governor's merit scholarship which would provide a \$5,000 scholarship to the top 5% of students in each district for those that attend a state-funded college or university. We do believe, however, that this will exacerbate the friction between students taking College Credit Plus courses versus those taking Advanced Placement, IB, and other courses. Weighted grades, already important, will become even more so to students fighting to be in the top 5%. OAGC believes it might be useful to incorporate a non-GPA factor in the merit scholarship criteria (e.g., ACT or SAT scores) to ease the inevitable increase in pressure on weighted grades due to the new scholarship.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

For more information, please contact OAGC Executive Director, Ann Sheldon at [anngift@aol.com](mailto:anngift@aol.com) or 614-325-1185 or OAGC Incoming Executive Director, Abbie Sigmon at [abbiesigmon@gmail.com](mailto:abbiesigmon@gmail.com).