



## **Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee on Amended Substitute House Bill 1**

**May 15, 2009**

Chairman Carey, Ranking Member Miller, members of the Sub-Committee:

Over the course of the last few months, gifted education has gone through three methods of funding: the current unit funding method that is a vestige of the old special education funding model, the faulty Odden and Picus gifted funding method, and the Ohio House organizational unit method. (To make matters even more confusing, a fourth model of gifted weights was actually proposed by the State Board of Education in November.) For an area that has been untouched for many years, gifted funding was certainly well-noticed in the current budget process. While the gifted community appreciates the attention, it has certainly been a stress-inducing few months of activity.

As the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC) board next meets on May 27, the association has not yet taken a formal position on the amended substitute bill, but I have included a draft of the board position statement that will likely be voted on that day and that has informal approval. The statement includes a full list of areas in the current bill that OAGC supports as well as areas that OAGC believes could be strengthened.

OAGC is grateful to members of the Ohio House for listening to our concerns about the grave consequences of using the funding method proposed in the introduced version of House Bill 1. While there may be some debate about other aspects of the model, I can attest to the fact that there is evidence to support the gifted funding factor in Amended Substitute House Bill 1. The changes to gifted funding in Amended Substitute House Bill 1 are significant:

- The gifted education support component is broken into 4 factors:
  1. Gifted identification factor at \$5 per ADM – no phase in
  2. Gifted coordinator factor funded at 1 per 2500 ADM at a level of \$66,375 for FY2010 and \$67,660 for FY2011 – no phase-in (about 670 coordinators)
  3. Gifted intervention specialist factor -- funded at 1 GIS per organizational unit (roughly each elementary, middle school and high school) at the same level as the core teacher factor (\$56,902 for FY2010 and \$57,812 for FY2011). This component is phased-in at .2 in FY2010, .3 in FY2011, .4 in FY2012 and FY2013, .6 in FY2014 and FY2015, .8 in FY2016 and FY2017 and fully funded in FY2018. This factor is multiplied by the challenge factor. This would equal about 640 GIS in FY2010 and in 960 GIS in FY2011.
  4. Professional development funds (\$1883) for gifted intervention specialists phased in along with the GIS levels.
- No districts will be allowed coordinator and GIS funding if they do not submit annual gifted plans or if they fail to identify gifted students.
- The funds will go for staffing and used for gifted services under the gifted operating standards with 15% of the funds for units from grades 6 – 12 allowed for services not provided by a gifted intervention specialist (e.g. content and arts specialists)
- Districts that currently receive gifted unit funding may spend no less than the amount they are currently receiving through unit funding.
- Districts that do not receive gifted unit funding may get a waiver for this biennium and possibly an additional year.

- A separate amount of funding will be available for ESC gifted units at \$8.1 million.
- Summer Honors Institutes are reinstated at current levels.
- Gifted funding is to be studied by the funding council – though there is no gifted representation.
- Enrichment funds are not to be used for gifted services.
- The proposed twenty additional days is to be studied and a member from a gifted association is to be included in the study group.
- A gifted performance indicator will be developed by the state superintendent.

While these changes represent a vast improvement over the introduced version of HB1, there are a few areas of concern that still remain. (A full list of OAGC concerns/list of improvements can be found in the attached draft of the OAGC Position Statement.)

- 1) Enrichment Funds Correction** – OAGC believes that a technical amendment is required to ensure that gifted students are not inadvertently excluded from Advanced Placement (AP) and Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) courses supported by the enrichment funding factor. The current language prohibits the use of enrichment funds to support gifted services, but AP and PSEO are allowable services for gifted students under Revised Code.
- 2) District Waivers for Gifted Funding** – OAGC believes clarifying language is required to ensure that all districts are required to spend gifted funds on gifted services by FY2011. The language as currently written would allow some districts, regardless of school ratings, to request waivers until FY2013.
- 3) Gifted Accountability Provisions** – Unfortunately, the necessary accountability provisions that are required for any gifted funding system are not fully delineated in the House version of HB1. OAGC requests that gifted education is identified as one of the Core Academic Strategies required of all districts. Otherwise, gifted services will be matter largely hit-and-miss across the state, even in districts rated as effective and excellent.
- 4) Waivers for Effective and Excellent Districts** -- OAGC is highly opposed to allowing waivers to districts rated as excellent or effective from the gifted funding provision. If districts are provided with funding to support gifted services, those funds should be used appropriately. Many districts rated as excellent or effective do little to support the needs of their high ability students.
- 5) Coordination services** – OAGC recommends that Revised Code be amended to mirror gifted operating standards by requiring gifted coordinator services in a district before funding for gifted intervention specialists can flow to the district.
- 6) School Funding Research Council** – Given the disastrous recommendations on gifted funding by Odden and Picus, neither of whom had adequate knowledge in gifted education or funding, it is clear that any gifted funding study must include individuals who have both gifted education and funding expertise. While gifted education funding is to be one of the areas to be studied by the Ohio school funding research funding council, no gifted education or funding experts are currently included on the council. OAGC requests that this oversight be corrected.

OAGC believes that gifted funding structure in Amended Substitute H.B. 1, if fully funded, will provide the adequate resources for districts to meet the needs of gifted students in Ohio. Funding alone, however, is not sufficient to support gifted students; a mandate to serve ALL gifted students based on the gifted operating standards is also necessary. It must be phased in along with funding or gifted services will continue to be a matter of zip code roulette, with some gifted students getting the services they need and others getting nothing. We have identified gifted students in Ohio since 1984. The intent of the identification law was to count the gifted students and then determine how to serve them. It has been twenty-five years, and gifted children are still waiting to be served in large numbers across the state. They have waited long enough.

For additional information, please contact Ann Sheldon, Executive Director of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children at [anngift@aol.com](mailto:anngift@aol.com) or 614-475-4416 or 614-325-1185 (cell). [www.oagc.com](http://www.oagc.com)