



**Testimony to the House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee on HB 64**  
**March 16, 2017**

Chairman Cupp, Ranking Member Miller, Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB49. My name is Judy Chaffins and I have worked as a gifted teacher or supervisor for the Allen County Educational Service Center (ESC) for over 30 years.

I would like to testify by focusing on the effects of legislation and funding in our county to illustrate there is much to be done to bring out the best in our state's bright children. I have attached a data sheet from Allen County school districts. I have not identified them because I think they represent many other school districts throughout our state. The numbers were taken from the Ohio Department of Education's website and reflect accurate data. If you examine it you will see that four districts have no trained gifted teacher on staff at all. Each of these districts receives over \$50,000 in funds intended for gifted use, but report little of those funds being used for gifted students' needs.

One district has one trained teacher in an elementary building one day per week. She has no classroom and instructs children in two different hallways. Both she and her students report it to be a very distracting environment as students frequently move in and out of classrooms and walk by inquiring as to what "those students are doing." The hallway also has an echo due to high ceilings. One young girl explained her reaction as, "I have ears like a bat. That echo drives me crazy!"

Two districts have a trained gifted teacher on staff two days per week. However, in one of those, the teacher also teaches in the hallway with unending interruptions, only a small table, no whiteboard or storage and not even a trash can to throw things away. She has seven students assigned to her in the afternoon and the maximum time she has to instruct all seven of them together is fifteen minutes.

In contrast, one district has two trained teachers on staff who teach students in grades three through eight in well-equipped classrooms and meet the time requirement for official service according to the Gifted Operating Standards. The difference is this district is the most affluent with the most concentration of parents who have professional standing and income. They are the most vocal and successful in having their children's needs known and met.

In my experience, rural parents often do not voice their needs and when they do, are ineffective in getting those needs met because the school staff is often unmoved. The prevailing cultural myth in those districts is that gifted students should be high performing, perfectly behaved, and their needs are appropriately met in the classroom. These districts and



staff do not see a need to make modifications for gifted students, and parents often have little recourse to change that.

The Allen County ESC currently charges districts \$17,610 to provide one day of gifted service per week for all year. That is the total cost of teacher salaries (years of experience included) with retirement and benefits averaged. In order for a district to provide services by a trained gifted teacher five days per week, the cost would be \$88,050. There is only one district that receives that much money for gifted. All of the others are short by a considerable amount, particularly the affluent district.

Please keep in mind, the funds allocated for gifted are also intended to be used for testing and identifying students, for gifted supervisor services, for instructional materials, and for professional development. It is clear to see the funding falls significantly short and has been for many years now. This has negative effects on multiple fronts. For example, in the fall I hired a teacher to instruct in two of the districts. She quit after one week of being on the job. She felt the conditions were not quality and the job unnecessarily difficult. It took me several other months before I could find and hire qualified candidates. There has been no incentive for teachers to get formal training in gifted education coursework as schools are focused on other issues.

We do a better job at planning and providing for bright students' needs at the high school level, but are hap hazard prior to that. Young students often find that school is not the place they thought it would be. They lose their eagerness, their enthusiasm and their love of learning because we spend too little time challenging and guiding them appropriately.

Bright students are statistically the most likely to become the next generation of professionals, skilled trade managers, leaders and active community volunteers throughout our state and beyond. As a culture, do we value them enough to prioritize a strong foundation for their education or do we leave it to chance? Education is an investment. Invest wisely and you get good returns. Realizing fully there are many competing needs in education, I ask you to consider where you can get the biggest return for your investment.

Please support increasing funds for gifted education and embed oversight and accountability for the use of those funds. It is more than an educational investment. It is a foundation that could empower our state to thrive economically as we attract and retain bright, hard-working people to lead us in the next generation.

Thank you for your time. I am open to any questions you might have.