



Testimony on Substitute HB110

June 3, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Substitute HB110 (HB110). The Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC) has three major concerns with the recent substitute bill accepted for HB110 in the Ohio Senate Finance Committee: the gifted funding formula remains with low salary levels, the gifted funding accountability measures were stripped from the House-passed version of HB110, and the school funding formula is being passed as a temporary funding mechanism. The latter two issues prohibit any transparency for what the state provides to districts regarding gifted education and leaves the public no ability to monitor how it is spent.

Gifted Funding Formula - Gifted funding has not increased in several years. The House version of HB110 included a gifted formula based on a gifted cost study conducted in 2018 overseen by the Ohio Department of Education. While OAGC has recommendations to improve the new formula, we believe that it is, on the whole, an improvement on the current gifted funding formula and would pass constitutional scrutiny. The biggest to change to the gifted funding formula in the House-passed HB110 was to update salaries for gifted coordinators and gifted intervention specialists. The current formula provides salaries based a teacher salary schedule dating from the 1970s funding just \$37,750 per gifted staff member or unit. The new formula would have increased those salaries to \$85,776 for a gifted coordinator, \$89, 378 for a K-8 gifted intervention specialist, and \$80,974 for a 9-12 gifted intervention specialist. Regardless of the school funding mechanism used for basic aid, the changes to the gifted funding formula are an appropriate fix to this categorical area. OAGC encourages the Ohio Senate to include the new gifted funding formula in HB110.

Gifted Funding Accountability and the Temporary Funding Formula - After the gifted unit funding system was dismantled in 2009, gifted education funding operated under a “maintenance of effort” provision until 2014. This provided absolute flexibility for districts to use state gifted funding to meet the needs of gifted children as they wished. This approach resulted in huge decreases in gifted identification, service, and staffing levels. The current gifted funding component, which has been in place since 2014 provides, at least on paper, about \$74 million in district funding through a formula that is calculated inside the foundation funding formula. (In the old gifted unit funding system, gifted funds were allocated outside the formula.) In addition, **\$3.8** million is allocated to ESCs (Educational Service Centers) for gifted coordinator and intervention specialist units.

In previous budgets, the gifted funds were broken out district-by-district in payment reports. However, in the current FY2020/FY2021 budget and in the Senate version of HB110, gifted funds are incorporated as part of the foundation formula total in a temporary funding measure, effectively leaving districts total discretion to use state gifted funds on gifted students or not. *ODE will not break out the gifted component of this temporary formula, effectively hiding the amount of gifted funding that flows to districts.* The gifted funding accountability provisions included in the House version of HB110 would have helped to rectify that situation. These provisions would:

- 1. Increase the level of accountability for gifted funding by strengthening the language that requires all districts to spend state gifted funding on the elements included in the gifted cost study formula.***

2. **Require ODE to collect and post data on gifted services offered by each district by grade band as well as the number of licensed gifted personnel employed or contracted by the district.** ODE already collects this data, and it would allow parents to see the types and levels of services provided to gifted students.
3. **Report the amount of state gifted funds provided to each district in the gifted expenditure report already produced by the ODE.**

Unfortunately, the Senate has removed these and other gifted accountability provisions in Substitute HB110. OAGC strongly supports these new gifted funding accountability provisions regardless of the funding system ultimately implemented in this budget. We encourage the Senate to restore these provisions in order to ensure that state gifted funding is used to support gifted students regardless of the funding system in place.

Other Issues

ACT/SAT Opt-Out – OAGC is opposed to the provision that permits the parent or guardian of a high school student to opt the student out of the requirement to take a nationally standardized college admission assessment beginning with the class of 2026 (currently, the prescribed test is either the ACT or SAT) and prohibits a district or school from administering the test to those that opt out. We believe this provision will lower access to economically-disadvantaged and minority students from taking these assessments.

Non-Public School Opt-Out of College Credit Plus Programs – OAGC is opposed to the provision that allows non-public schools to opt-out of participating in College Credit Plus. College Credit Plus is a program that is of huge benefit to students, families, and the state as a whole. While a non-public school can overall be a good fit for a student, this provision will decrease the likelihood that every student across Ohio will be able to gain college credit in high school. This is not in the best interest of students or the public-at-large.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please feel to reach out for more information.

For more information, please contact OAGC Executive Director, Ann Sheldon at anngift@aol.com or 614-325-1185.