



March 4, 2025

House Education Committee

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is **Beth Wilson-Fish**, and I come to you today wearing two hats: **as a 10-year school board member for Orange City Schools** and **as an educator and gifted advocate with 40 years of experience in education.**

Throughout my career as a **Gifted Intervention Specialist, Gifted Consultant, and Gifted Coordinator**, I have had the privilege of serving in numerous school districts across Ohio. These include **Cleveland Municipal, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, and Orange**. After retiring from **Orange City Schools**, I have had the unique opportunity over the last 10 years to work with several other school districts, including **Euclid, Kirtland, James A. Garfield, Brooklyn, Cuyahoga Heights**, and, most recently, **Shaker Heights City Schools**, where I currently serve as the **District's Gifted Coordinator**.

I am here to testify on the **Fair School Funding Plan, the removal of gifted professional development funds** in §3317.022, and **gifted intervention specialist to student ratios** in §3317.051 of HB96.

Fair School Funding Plan

I understand that **Governor DeWine** has included the next two years of the **Fair School Funding Plan phase-in** in his budget proposal. This is a crucial step toward ensuring that **all students in Ohio** have the opportunity to learn.

However, without **updating base costs** to reflect the **2024 fiscal year**, this plan **falls short** of fully funding the formula as originally intended.

- **90% of Ohio's students** attend public schools.
- **90% of those students** will receive **less funding this year** under the current projections.
- **More than half of Ohio's school districts** are expected to receive **less funding in fiscal year 2026** unless adjustments are made.

We **cannot** continue to rely solely on **local property taxes** to fund Ohio's schools—nor should this even be considered a viable option.

Ask:

I urge this committee to **fully fund** the Fair School Funding Plan **as originally intended**, using **updated base costs** and a **fully phased-in funding model**.

§3317.022 Gifted Professional Development Funds

Ohio has **roughly 1.7 million students**, and of those, approximately **265,000 are identified as gifted**—just over **16%** of the student population. Thankfully, gifted identification is **mandatory**, ensuring that students who require specialized gifted services are properly recognized. These students rely on **Gifted Intervention Specialists** or **general education teachers with gifted professional development** to meet their unique academic needs.

However, **gifted professional development funding has been removed from HB96**. Without this funding:

- **General education teachers** will lack the necessary training to identify and effectively serve gifted students.
- In **Shaker Heights Schools alone**, this will impact **111 classroom teachers** who currently provide gifted services.

Ask:

I urge you to **reinstate funding for gifted professional development** in HB96 to ensure that **general education teachers** have the knowledge and resources needed to properly support Ohio's gifted students.

§3317.051 GIS:Student Ratios

We have **940 Gifted Intervention Specialists (GIS) in Ohio**, each performing a wide range of critical tasks. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- **Collaborating with general education teachers** to modify curriculum and instructional approaches for gifted students.
- **Serving as a resource and coach** for teachers, supporting the implementation of best practices in gifted education.
- **Working with administrators, school counselors, and support staff** to ensure gifted services align with district policies.
- **Communicating regularly with parents/guardians** to provide updates on student progress and available services.

- **Assisting in the identification and assessment** of gifted students based on Ohio's gifted identification criteria.
- **Developing and maintaining Written Education Plans (WEPs)** to ensure compliance with state regulations.
- **Advocating for equitable gifted programming** to ensure all identified students have access to appropriate services.

While some GIS are fortunate to work within a **single school building**, many serve **multiple buildings and grade levels** within a district, making their workload even more demanding.

To suggest that each Gifted Intervention Specialist should manage a **140-student caseload** is both **unfair and unrealistic**. This assumption fails to acknowledge the complexity of their role and the level of individualized support required to meet the needs of gifted learners effectively.

Ask:

I ask that gifted interventionist to student ratios be restored to the recommended level of 1 GIS:80 students.

Thank you to the members of this committee for taking the time to listen to my testimony. I appreciate your consideration of this important issue and welcome any questions you may have.