



Chair Callender, Chair Gavarone, and members of the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Abbie Sigmon and I am the executive director of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC). With nearly 1,000 members, OAGC promotes and supports the development of gifted students in Ohio by advocating on their behalf.

There are 225,000 identified gifted students in Ohio. Comparatively, we have fewer than 940 Gifted Intervention Specialists (GISs) and fewer than 1150 gifted staff - including ESC staff. While I will be discussing specific sections of the Gifted Draft Rule, it is important to note that these ratios of gifted staff to gifted students are deeply unsatisfactory and directly contributes to the daily burnout, struggles, and exhaustion of gifted staff.

I am here to provide testimony regarding ORC 3301-51-15, operating standards for identifying and serving students who are gifted. The Gifted Rule, as written, will

**Cluster Grouping - Section C(4)(d) and (e)**

Cluster groups occur when students identified as gifted are deliberately placed together in a classroom. We are thankful that language has been added to the Gifted Rule that would limit the size of cluster group classes to a minimum of three and a maximum of twenty. Additionally, OAGC supports the addition of language requiring that students in a cluster group shall only be grouped together “where the students’ gifted identification areas are similarly related.”

**WEP Meetings - Section C(5)(a)(iii)**

Previous drafts of the Gifted Rule would have required a Gifted Intervention Specialist (GIS) to meet with the parent or guardian of the gifted child and obtain their signature on the WEP. OAGC firmly supports parent and guardian involvement in a child’s education; however, this requirement would have been extraneous. We support the change in the final draft of the Gifted Rule that would require “reasonable attempt at the commencement of services and each year thereafter to obtain parent input on the WEP and the parent’s signature on the WEP.” This is an attainable requirement that will still involve parents and guardians in the education of their gifted child.

**Providers of Professional Development - Section E(1)(b)(iii)(a-e)**

OAGC is thankful for the language that stipulates that providers of professional development hours must themselves be experts in gifted education. For too long, gifted professional development hours could be provided by individuals without gifted endorsements, licensure or



graduate degrees. This section will ensure that those who receive gifted professional development hours will do so from an expert.

### **Professional Development for General Education Teachers E(1)(b)(iv)**

The draft of the Gifted Rule released on January 12, 2024 included language that required five hours of ongoing professional development for general education teachers. This requirement was both supported by OAGC and the Ohio Education Association (OEA). Even with the support of both of those associations, ODEW replaced that language that would require that general education teachers “participate in on-going specialized training in gifted education each year thereafter.” This is a frustrating step backwards in ensuring gifted students are recognized, differentiated, and taught according to their needs.

### **No Service Letters (formerly section F)**

The previous Gifted Rule required that Gifted Intervention Specialists notify parents and guardians of gifted students that their student would not be receiving gifted service. Ohio mandates the identification of gifted students, but the service of gifted students is not mandated. No Service Letters were a powerful tool that would provide parents and guardians of gifted children ongoing updates on gifted services. Against our recommendations to ODEW, this section has been removed from the final Gifted Rule.

### **Talent Development (formerly section D)**

OAGC wants to thank the members of this committee and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce for listening to our concerns regarding the talent development section of the Gifted Rule. To be clear, OAGC supports talent development as a means to identify students with gifted potential and provide them challenging and enriching educational content. Talent development must happen with input from GISs; however, talent development should not detract from gifted students’ education. As written, this section could erode gifted services across the state.

Finally, OAGC is concerned with the removal of a corrective plan following an audit which was located in the original draft of this rule. Parents or other individuals should be allowed to file a gifted education complaint and request that ODEW investigate alleged violations of either Chapter 3324 of the ORC or the Gifted Rule. After an investigation, districts will be provided an opportunity to respond to allegations. The department could then proceed with corrective action after a gifted education complaint investigation was completed. The removal of this language as well as the no service letters eliminates support for families trying to advocate for gifted children - an already difficult process..



## JCARR Testimony

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Thank you to this committee for considering OAGC's feedback on the Gifted Rule. I am happy to address any questions or concerns at this time.