

e-mailed  
Public Hearing Testimony Speaker:

Michele Hankin

Dear Chairman Fleischmann, Chairman Gaffey &  
Education Committee:

Date:  
3/12/07

Bill Number:  
7358

I first would like to thank you for allowing RB# 7358 : **AN ACT CONCERNING GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS** a public hearing.

It is vital to provide services to gifted children. I am the mother of a profoundly gifted first grader, she read when she turned 3, she writes fabulous stories and learns anything she is exposed to immediately. She is years ahead of the curriculum in all subjects. She deserves to go to school and learn and experience challenge. In my district, they have not identified gifted children until the 4th grade and then they get a one hour a week program, before school. During the day, gifted children (although not necessarily identified) generally do the standard work of the classroom, working nowhere near their potential and simply, learning little. As per Debrah Ruff, a nationally known gifted expert, the typical curriculum is written to the top of the bottom third of the class. Gifted children need a differentiated curriculum. My daughter is fortunate, and is the exception. She was so obviously gifted that they single subject accelerated her into 2nd grade for language. However, they had no obligation to do this and most gifted children do not get identified or given any service at this age. This puts them at risk of underachieving, behavioral issues and losing their interest in school.

In this world of differentiated classrooms, where the student at the bottom, the most gifted and all students in between are purposefully put in the same classroom, we clearly need to provide stimulating material for gifted children. It is unrealistic that even the best teacher can teach to such a wide range of students. Teachers I know readily admit this. The gifted child learns things quickly, in a few repetitions, a fraction of what the average learner needs. Gifted students need to have programs developed for them, their needs are different. They need to move at a faster pace and to be challenged to think more deeply. It is unrealistic for even the best teachers to be able to meet the needs of the gifted child without funded programs designed for them.

Gifted children need to be identified in all grades and then programs need to be developed for them. There should be certification for gifted teachers and other teachers should be trained to understand how to identify gifted students and how to best meet their needs. Gifted children are not necessarily the best students, some have great deficits as well as great giftedness; they are not always obvious.

Although anyone can be our great citizens of the United States in the future, gifted children can be some our best prospects to be the great scientist, the great peacemaker, the great economist, even the next leader of our country. We need to nurture the gifted children, and all children, to their own individual potentials, even if requires additional services.

However, for this to really happen the state needs to mandate that gifted programs are funded. Gifted programs are the first thing to be reduced or eliminated during difficult

town budget seasons. This happened in our town a few years ago, and the program has not been the same since. (I've been very involved in education advocacy locally. There is always a fight to maintain status quo, let alone move things ahead (like a best-practices gifted program.)

Please put this act lto a Joint Favorable Substitute vote. These children are just as in need of legislation to protect them as any other special needs group.

Thank you for your time and diligence.

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