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Gelnett, Wanda B.

From: Schalles, Scott R.
Sent: Tuesday, October 09, 2007 2:36 PM
To: Gelnett, Wanda B.
Subject: FW: gifted education

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Public comment on 2635

-----Original Message-----

From: Michelle Warman [mailto:michelel@epix.net]**Sent:** Tuesday, October 09, 2007 2:20 PM**To:** j buckheit@state.pa.us; lbaker@pasen.gov; info@phyllismundy.com; Schalles, Scott R.; musto@pasenate.com; jyudichak@pa.house.net**Subject:** gifted education

Dear Governor Rendell, Members of the IRRC, Mr. Buckheit, Mr. Schalles, Senate Education Committee, State Senator Baker, State Senator Musto, State Representative Yudichak and State Representative Mundy;

I am writing to you because gifted education is sorely in need of improvement in the state of Pennsylvania. Our brightest young minds are being ignored and set aside. Imagine a gifted person, intellectually capable of attending high school or even college, being forced to sit through grade school or middle school classes for one hundred and eighty days out of the year. Imagine that same child having to do it all over again the following year. And the next. And the next. It would seem as absurd and unnecessary as you yourselves being forced to once again attend grade school at this point in your lives. That is what many gifted children face, currently. That is what my child and her gifted peers currently face. (My daughter currently attends middle school in the Wyoming Valley West School District.)

At this point, you would probably try to inform me that there are services available to gifted students in the state of Pennsylvania. I would tell you that my daughter is currently being helped by some of them. I would also tell you that it has been a nightmare trying to get those services for my daughter, even though the state regulations clearly mandate them.

But, that is not the sole point of my letter. My most pressing point is this... while it is clear that the state's policies on gifted education need improvement, it is more of a priority to first address the proposed changes in Chapter 16 Regulations regarding Gifted Children in Pennsylvania. Let's not further cripple, so to speak, the already-wounded animal that is gifted education in the state of Pennsylvania. I have serious concerns that gifted education would be further negatively affected if the proposed changes to Chapter 16 are implemented.

The following details my comments on the proposed changes:

1. Class Size (16.41) should be limited to 20 students. An increase to 25 would make it impossible for education to be truly individualized for the gifted students. As is, at 20 students per class, the ability to individualize is quite difficult for a teacher trying to manage 20 students with vastly different needs within the same classroom.

2. Compliance Monitoring: This was one of my biggest questions... how do parents go about requesting compliance monitoring for their particular school district??? Chapter 16 should be updated to embed compliance monitoring language and procedures to be followed. There should also be a process by which parental complaints can be filed and investigated by the PDE. -- When I had issues with my gifted daughter's needs not being met by the school district, I found that there was nowhere I could turn within the PDE to get the type of help I needed. I eventually had to hire an advocate to help me "beg" for an adequate education for my child. There are many parents that cannot take such steps. Compliance monitoring should be made available in "problem districts" without forcing countless families to hire advocates or to end up in due-process hearings.

3. I support the Case Load (16.41) being limited to 60 students. This should be the maximum allowed on a full-time gifted teacher's roster.

4. Criteria used for Identification should not focus solely on IQ. The wording in section 16.21 should be changed to: ...includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher OR when multiple criteria as set forth in this chapter and in

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Department Guidelines indicate gifted ability.

5. Graduation Planning should also be implemented in Chapter 16. A student should receive credit for high school classes taken at the Middle School level. It is the responsibility of the school districts to meet the gifted students' needs at every level.

In summary, I am asking that these comments be presented to the IRRC, the State Board of Education, the Senate Education Committee and any others involved in the proposed changes to Chapter 16. I also urge you to make decisions that are in the best interest of the gifted students. They are our hope for a brighter future, let's not ignore them.

I look forward to you addressing the above concerns.

Sincerely,
Michelle Warman
Parent of Gifted
Wyoming Valley West School District
Luzerne, PA

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