

11/16/23 Written Testimony by Dave Mendell
President of Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education

To the Members of the Basic Education Funding Commission:

PAGE, the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education, is a non-profit organization that works on the behalf of the more than 60,000 children in Pennsylvania that are identified as gifted learners. Currently, Gifted Education in Pennsylvania is an unfunded mandate. Chapter 16 of the PA School Code dictates how schools and districts are required to support gifted learners but the state education budget allocates no money to support these students. With little support and little oversight, many districts, especially in more impoverished areas, are likely to provide minimal, if any, support for these students.

Sadly, many people incorrectly assume that gifted students will be “just fine” because the stereotype suggests they are excellent students who love school. The reality is that gifted students NEED specialized education to keep them engaged in learning and to help them reach their potential, just as students with learning disabilities do.

As the Basic Education Funding Commission takes into consideration the needs of all students and Districts across the State of Pennsylvania, we ask that the funding needs for gifted learners is taken into consideration.

Allocating \$73 million as a line-item for Gifted Education in the State Education budget will greatly improve the educational services that Gifted students require. Funding at this level could help improve equity by funding teaching positions and providing greater levels of administrative support and oversight to ensure that Pennsylvania’s gifted students receive the educational support that they need to grow and thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.