

I support SB 478 as amended because it is important that students who are talented or gifted have appropriate educational experiences. This means they must be identified in the first place.

Students who are racial or ethnic minorities, are learning English, come from low-income families, have disabilities, or reside in rural areas are less likely to be identified for TAG programs. Not appropriately identifying students means that they are not getting the educational interventions they need to be successful. Many of the students in these groups do not have access to the enrichment opportunities better educated and more affluent parents provide. They depend on public schools for opportunities and those start with proper identification.

As a student in a small rural school in Michigan I enjoyed school and graduated first in my class. I received a scholarship to a private college nationally known for its outstanding programs. Unfortunately, my high school had not prepared me for rigorous course content even though I took more than the required number of courses for graduation and easily earned A's. I had not needed to develop study skills or been expected to go beyond minimum requirements. Discouraged by poor college grades, I dropped out after one year. Years later, I learned that my situation was common among gifted individuals who lacked early recognition and sustained support.

In Oregon, too many children are not being recognized for their abilities by current identification practices. Then they don't get the kinds of educational opportunities or social and emotional support they require to thrive and develop. The children, their families, their communities, and the entire state suffer from the inequitable identification of TAG students.