I'd like to start by addressing a note in the draft minutes of last month's advisory committee meeting to explain again why the newly adopted Local Plan is non-compliant. The state of Virginia not only provides us a definition of what "gifted" means but also what gifted learners require:

"Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs."

Another section elaborates further:

Identified gifted students shall be offered placement in an instructional setting that provides:
1. Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction provided by professional instructional personnel trained to work with gifted students; and
2. Monitored and assessed student outcomes that are reported to the parents and legal guardians.

**Here is the problem: under the new Local Plan, even if a student in K-3 is identified as GIA, the services they receive are no different than everyone else, which is a direct contradiction to the requirements outlined above.**

Let's look at how this is currently working in practice in my 2nd grader's classroom as an example. The AAS teacher comes into the classroom once a week for 30 minutes and presents an activity to the entire class.  It should be noted that at other schools, this is happening even less frequently, as little as once every two or three weeks. During the activity, the vast majority of the kids are tuned out and not following along, and only a small number of students even participate.  The idea that this approach is serving gifted learners is a farce.

The facts on the ground are already debunking a central premise of the updated local plan – that identifying gifted learners in K-3 no longer needs to be a priority because every student (including gifted learners) miraculously gets the precise differentiation they require. This premise and its implications are stated explicitly in the TAGAC 2022-2023 year-end report as follows:

"prioritizing ACPS resources to support delivering differentiated, rigorous, creative, and critical thinking instruction to all students in the early grades (particularly K–3) **may reduce the ACPS resources available to spend on determining TAG eligibility for K–3 students.**" This false choice leads us to wonder: Why is ACPS choosing to ignore the needs of so many gifted learners, particularly in the younger grades?

I want to point out another item in the October Committee minutes where the facts are not right. A line on page 3 regarding push-in vs. pull-out services says, "Even though the 2017 external review encouraged us to move to a push-in model for LA and math, we, as a division and steering committee determined that the shift was not ready to be made."

In fact, the 2017 external review said no such thing! Here is what it *actually* said about the 4th and 5th grade pull-out services, in a section entitled "commendations":

"The pullout program at grades 4 and 5 (replacement curriculum) in both language arts and math provides the opportunity for advanced curriculum challenge in these two key areas of the curriculum. It is perceived by parents, students, and staff to be an effective intervention at those levels of learning. Classroom observation data also confirm its effectiveness."

This discrepancy raises a big red flag for me. It's becoming clear that the division is seeking to further dismantle whatever TAG services remain. The first steps were the elimination of accelerated math, despite the fact that this is precisely the type of intervention that many gifted learners need, and the elimination of any real gifted services for those in K-3.  The next target seems to be pull-out services writ large. I and many others remain very concerned not only about the failures in the new local plan, but in the direction that this division seems determined to go.  It's a direction that further reduces services to gifted learners, while employing questionable justifications along the way.  I urge you to please work to right this ship before any more irreparable harm can be done. Thank you.