

Alaska Legislature

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House Bill 76 Sponsor Statement

The mission of the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education is to, “[create] change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities”. Since 1978, the Council has provided a constructive process that has connected the public with policymakers to ensure the thoughtful development of an efficient and seamless service delivery system that meets the needs of individuals with disabilities across their life spans.

However, within their enabling statutes, the State of Alaska also included “gifted” persons among the individuals that the Council need work for and support. The Council believes the term “gifted” to be confusing and ill-fitting within the scope of their aims and objectives. Furthermore, they believe “gifted” should be removed for the following reasons:

- Exceptionality is not a disability that entitles students to special education. Gifted education is a regular education program over which the Council has no oversight.
- Gifted children are not eligible for additional services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), policies whose adherence is required per the Council’s responsibilities.
- Neither federal nor state law provide for special employment benefits, or special avenues through which to advocate for employment for those classified as gifted.

The Governor’s Council works tirelessly to advocate for and access housing, employment, independent living, health, transportation and community inclusion for Alaskans with disabilities. Removing the word “gifted” from their enabling statutes allows Alaska law to be updated with the most accurate representation of the mission and work of the Council, as well as provide future Council membership with a clear roadmap for success.

Please support House Bill 76, and the removal of the perplexing inclusion of the word “gifted” in the enabling statutes of the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education.