Good evening Chairman, Madame Vice Chairman and members of the Loudoun County School Board,  

As an advisory committee to the Loudoun County School Board, it is incumbent upon the Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee to bring to your attention a concern regarding the screening, referral, and identification of students for Gifted Education Services within LCPS. We are specifically concerned about the lack of progress being made to achieve the gifted program goal focused on equitable representation of students.

A comparison of LCPS 2012/2013 overall student enrollment data and gifted student enrollment data shows that Black/African American, Hispanic and Native American students were not proportionally reflected in the LCPS gifted program; white and Pacific Islander student enrollment and gifted program participation were proportional, while Asian student participation in the gifted program was proportionately greater than their overall representation in the LCPS school system. Five years later, the numbers have not significantly changed. Today, Black/African American, Hispanic and American Indian students are still disproportionately represented in the LCPS gifted program even though some students from historically underrepresented populations are being exposed to EDGE in elementary school and open enrollment in all honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses in secondary schools. We would like to submit Exhibit 1 for your consideration.

Our numbers of gifted students are very high for some groups and very low for others. According to experts like the National Association for Gifted Children, children who are in the top 10 percent in relation to a national and/or local norm are a good guide for identification and services.

MSAAC urges the board to ensure that the screening, referral and identification of students for gifted education services be more equitable within LCPS. We are especially concerned about our Black/African American, Hispanic and American Indian students and their access to Gifted Education Services. We recommend the following:

- Expand implementation of the EDGE and EDGE PLUS programs in LCPS schools, where data demonstrates underrepresentation; consider other best practices for school systems that have successfully addressed this issue.
- Require all teachers and decision makers to immediately participate in Unconscious Bias training to ensure that the selection and evaluation process is equitable and fair for all students. Teachers need to better understand how to recognize strengths and skills that ALL students bring to the educational experience, especially students who are different from them (economically, racially, culturally, linguistically, socially, etc.).
- Work more proactively with MSAAC and other parent advisory groups to fully understand concerns and challenges facing students with regards to their access to gifted services so future related school board and LCPS decisions reflect a more comprehensive understanding of these issues.

According to the National Association for Gifted Children, “giftedness exists in every demographic group and personality type. Adults must look harder to discover potential and support gifted children as they reach for their personal best”. The longer it takes to address this issue about selection criteria, identification and referrals, the longer we continue to undervalue our diverse talent pool. Reach out to your stakeholders about gifted student services to better understand concerns and potential solutions. Please ensure that the 2018/2019 budget allows for these recommendations.