

# Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education & Care Funding

## Commission Report: Findings and Recommendations

### Overview and Notes

*This draft document contains an overview of the Early Childhood Funding Commission's background, proceedings, findings from deliberations from December 2019 through the present, and implementation considerations and next steps. This document is intended to pair with a publicly consumable primer. The final version of this report will be submitted to the Governor in March 2021 and will remain in draft form and subject to revision and finalization until that time.*

### Summary of Findings & Recommendations

The Commission strongly recommends that the State seize this moment to reimagine and adequately invest in a system that leads with racial equity, prioritizes community and stakeholder engagement in decision-making at the program, community, and state levels, ensures quality and access to comprehensive ECEC experiences, and provides transparency and accountability. To operationalize our vision and make it sustainable, the Commission offers **three specific recommendations to make ECEC work better for Illinois children, families, and providers**. We acknowledge they are a heavy lift, especially in light of the state's current economic realities, but we also acknowledge the urgency of our charge and the timing, given the current focus on racial and economic injustice. The recommendations are:

- **Key Recommendation 1 – The State should use the long-term ECEC funding goal developed by this Commission in its policy making.** The long-term goal articulated by the Commission conveys the level of investment that is adequate and how current funding compares. This enables policy makers and state leadership to understand where we are relative to where we need to go and can inform how Illinois prioritizes investments to achieve the funding goal.
  - The Commission finds that an adequately funded system will require an annual public investment of no less than \$12.4 billion (with \$2.0 billion investment by families), compared to the current annual state and federal investment of \$1.9 billion today. Current funding represents only 14% of what is adequate.
  - The Commission recommends that several components of the cost model be further studied to enhance its accuracy and comprehensiveness. Additionally, the cost model must be periodically updated to reflect dynamic needs and assumptions.
  - The Commission recognizes that it will take many years to reach adequate funding and this report should not be viewed as a budget proposal; however, the Commission recommends that a multi-year plan be created for increasing public investment.
- **Key Recommendation 2 - Centralize the ECEC funding system and distribute funding in new ways.** A coordinated funding approach will enable policy makers and state leadership to send money where it is most needed, and bring greater predictability and stability for providers, creating better services for children. It will create more transparency in the service of equity, and it will better align with the Federal investment in Head Start and Early Head Start.
  - The Commission recommends centralizing state and federal funding that is currently spread across three state agencies.

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- The Commission recommends that the State transition primarily to a system of weighted formula-based funding and multi-year contracts to providers, with the expectation that the final system may need to maintain vouchers in some circumstances.
- Funding for start-up and incubation should be provided via targeted grants.
- **Key Recommendation 3 – Centralize ECEC into one State agency**
  - The Commission recommends that ECEC should be centralized into a new agency focused solely on ECEC with designated community and regional structures, making the system easier for parents and providers. The Commission acknowledges that centralizing ECEC into a new agency will require significant planning and resources, both one time and recurring. As such, the implementation will take time.
  - This new agency must center racial equity to ensure equitable outcomes for children and families.
  - It will elevate and unify early childhood issues and policy matters, unify the state’s ECEC mission and goals, create a voice for early childhood at the state cabinet level, ensure one set of standards and accountability linked to one funding system, unify family and community engagement, and better support providers in the mixed delivery system.
  - The creation of a community and regional infrastructure will ensure input from families and providers into state level decision making, recognizing that community input and data can fuel distribution of funds more effectively and equitably.

Progress toward the Commission’s vision and action on the Commission’s findings and recommendations will require significant work and multi-agency dedication. A designated, accountable leader will be needed for this work with designated resources for planning and implementation activities. An advisory group should guide the work, and State agencies and the advisory group should together prioritize continuous stakeholder engagement.

## The Opportunity and Challenges for Illinois’s Early Childhood Education and Care System

### The Opportunity

Each child comes into this world full of their own unique abilities and promise. We know that “the largest opportunities to improve the trajectory of a child’s life happen during pregnancy and the earliest years of life”<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing the crucial importance of supporting children and families from the very start, Governor JB Pritzker set a clear and ambitious goal in his charge to the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding: “Illinois will

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<sup>1</sup> J.B. Pritzker, Jeffrey L. Bradache, and Katherine Kauffman, “Achieving Kindergarten Readiness for All Our Children: A Funder’s Guide to Early Childhood Development from Birth to Five”, The Bridgespan Group and Pritzker Children’s Initiative, 10/20/2015.

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become the best state in the nation for families raising young children, with the nation's best early childhood education and child care. Our work towards this goal won't be complete until every child in this state enters kindergarten with the cognitive skills to think, learn, read, remember, pay attention, and solve problems, but also the social emotional skills to communicate, connect with others, resolve conflict, self-regulate, display kindness and cope with challenges." These are the skills that high-quality early childhood education and care programs help young children develop.

The dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and our nation's long overdue reckoning with racial injustice have highlighted the need to ensure that our system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is prepared to deliver high quality services to all our children and families, especially those who have been systemically disenfranchised. As the current economic crisis has exposed, the long-term economic security of our state depends upon a supported workforce, supported

#### **Illinois' nation-leading Early Childhood response to the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of stable funding in ECEC**

In March 2020, as the Commission was just beginning to meet in its workgroups to study and address the longstanding challenges facing the Early Childhood Education and Care system in Illinois, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted almost every sector of society. Child care and early learning programs closed except to serve children of essential workers, and providers of home visiting and Early Intervention were forced to rapidly transition to virtual rather than face-to-face services. At the time this report is released, ECEC programs continue to face significant challenges, including decreased enrollment and increased costs related to implementing enhanced health and safety protocols.

Recognizing the extreme financial burden facing ECEC providers as a result of the pandemic, the Pritzker administration immediately implemented policies that would give providers financial relief and allow them to focus on meeting the needs of families and children. These included temporary changes to our Child Care Assistance Program such as paying based on enrollment instead of attendance and assisting providers in accessing federal relief like the Paycheck Protection Program. In July 2020, Illinois implemented the nation-leading Child Care Restoration Grants, investing \$290 million in Business Interruption Grant funds to sustain the child care industry through financial support to centers and homes that were required to operate with reduced capacity. As additional federal funding for child care has been provided, the State is working to ensure that providers continue to receive the support they need to make it through this difficult time.

The needs of child care providers in the pandemic has shown a national spotlight on the precarious nature of our current tuition-based funding approach to most child care. As this Commission has noted, a more stable base of funding, supported with public resources, is needed to ensure that we have equitable access to high quality early childhood education and care for all families that need and want it for their children.

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families, and children equipped with the skills they need to reach their inherent potential. Equitable access to high quality ECEC is foundational to our collective success as a state.

The Commission's critical work of improving Illinois' ECEC system is done in service of our youngest children, borne from an obligation and a responsibility to families and communities across the State. The work is centered on ensuring that each child's gifts and strengths are cultivated and given opportunity to flourish. This vision requires that we reach all children and families in all corners of the state, with an intentional focus on racial, linguistic, and geographic equity. It's important that equitable access to high-quality ECEC services support the whole child, and this means also supporting the family, the provider and their staff, and the community. As we embark on this work, we reiterate that the goal is to support the development of and build upon the inherent strengths and abilities in each child, each family, and each community.

### **Background on ECEC in Illinois**

Early childhood education and care services support children from birth through age five, and serve two critical purposes: first, to support the developing child through nurturing, supportive interactions and environments, thereby building the child's readiness for success in school and later life; and second, to support parents/guardians' ability to participate in the workforce. ECEC is one significant part of a larger eco-system of early childhood services – an ecosystem that includes pre- and perinatal and pediatric health care, mental health services, child welfare services, economic supports for families, and parks, libraries, and other community services. ECEC services include home visiting (parent coaching) for expecting families and families with children typically ages birth to three and education and care for children ages birth to Kindergarten entry. Education and care services are delivered in a variety of settings, including in homes, community-based organizations, and schools. This variety of settings is referred to in early childhood as the "Mixed-Delivery System." Services may be part-day, school-day, or full-work-day in length, depending on the needs of the child and family. ECEC services must be designed to effectively serve children with all types of needs, including children with developmental delays or disabilities, and they must build on the significant strengths of "English Learners," supporting their language development in both their home language and English.

Illinois has a history of ECEC innovation. We are seen as a national leader in providing home visiting services; Illinois was one of the first states in the country to make robust investments in child care; we were one of the earliest states to establish state funded preschool and include a birth-to-three set-aside in that fund; we were the first state to enact legislation regarding the provision of bilingual services in state funded preschool programs; we have pioneered several cross-system supports for the mixed delivery system, such as the ExceleRate Quality Ratings and Improvement System, the Gateways to Opportunity credentialing and professional development system, and intentional supports for providers to blend and braid funds. These supports have

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helped put Illinois on the map for our ECEC services. However, our system, like that of most states, has real shortcomings.

### **The Challenge: Key Findings About the Current System**

***Despite the State's efforts and increased investments in recent years, access to high quality services remains inadequate and inequitable across race, ethnicity, geography, & age.*** While Illinois has many successes and much to be proud of in its ECEC system, it is clear that the current system is not working for all young children and families. There is insufficient and uneven access to high-quality early childhood education and care. There are approximately 800,000 children under age five in Illinois today, about 40% of whom are in low-income families. At most, about half of children age birth to five from low-income families in Illinois are receiving some form of services. Service levels are especially low for infants and toddlers. While there are enough spots for children funded in Preschool for All and/or Head Start to serve about 80% of low-income three- and four-year-olds, Prevention Initiative and Early Head Start can only serve about 15% of low-income children under age three. This is significant as we learn more about brain development and understand that this developmental timeframe is key to laying a strong foundation for learning and growth. Access to quality early learning services varies dramatically from county to county and town to town, both within specific ECEC programs (such as Preschool for All or Head Start) and across all ECEC offerings. Supply varies even across communities with similar need profile: the distribution of high-quality ECEC does not seem to be strongly tied to level of need in the community or the number of low-income children in the community. There are ECEC deserts: in a few counties, there are no high-quality ECEC options, and in at least four southern counties there were no licensed ECEC centers at all at.<sup>2</sup> As there has not been comprehensive planning to date, racial equity has not been a key driver of the state's investment in early childhood. And in fact, limited data makes understanding racial equity incredibly challenging.

The lack of access to high-quality ECEC contributes to low levels of kindergarten readiness in Illinois. In the Fall of 2019, only 20% of low-income children (and 29% of all Illinois children)<sup>3</sup> demonstrated full readiness across the language/literacy, math, and social-emotional domains when they entered kindergarten. There are significant disparities in readiness by race, with 23% of Black and 17% of Hispanic students demonstrating full readiness as compared to 35% of White and Asian students. While many factors contribute to kindergarten readiness, including access to health and mental health services, nutrition and adequate housing, providing high

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<sup>2</sup> ECEC Funding Commission presentation, Boston Consulting Group. This report constitutes a fact base on the state of ECEC funding in Illinois, including obstacles to efficient alignment of funding streams and equitable access to quality ECEC and was developed to support the Funding Commission's work. Erikson Institute's Risk and Reach and Fiscal Scan compile data on risk factors that undermine child development and compares them to the reach of publicly funded programs and services that support early childhood well-being.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Fall-2019-KIDS-Report.pdf>

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quality parenting support and early education is a proven strategy for supporting young children's success—a strategy whose promise is not currently being fully realized in our state.

#### **There is inadequate funding for the system overall, including a woefully underpaid workforce.**

Illinois spends close to \$2 billion per year on ECEC in federal and state dollars administered across three state agencies, with much more invested by families, local government, philanthropy, and other private sources. However, at this level of funding, the supply of providers of high-quality ECEC is not large enough to meet demand or need.

While the State spends much less than is needed on ECEC, our current system actually costs more than it would appear on the surface. The system has many 'hidden costs' – that is, costs that do not show up on the financial costs of the system but exist and are borne elsewhere. When these hidden costs are added in, the system's true costs are much larger. These include:

- Families paying high fees for care or suffering lost wages after leaving the workforce because they cannot afford child care
- Workers subsidizing the system by being paid significantly far below the market average for their level of education and skill, with many eligible for public benefits such as SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid despite their education and certifications
- Costs associated with children's lack of kindergarten readiness – including extra investment needed in K12 as well as the long-term social costs that stem at least partially from insufficient ECEC.

It is critical that we acknowledge that much of this cost is borne by families with low or moderate income, by communities of color, and by women of color who make up much of the ECEC workforce. These are economic and racial equity challenges that must be resolved. Moreover, because the infrastructure that supports such a system is itself underfunded and diffuse, there is underinvestment in critical sub-systems such as: data and accountability systems, parent engagement and support, and support to build capacity, increase quality, and launch new providers. This underinvestment in infrastructure hinders the implementation of an equitable system.

**Inadequate, inequitable services are driven by a complex and confusing system.** This inadequacy and inequity stems from a lack of cohesiveness and coherency in system planning and oversight. Today's state ECEC system is governed by three separate agencies: Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) serves as a coordinating body, and Head Start and Early Head Start funds are administered by the federal government directly to their grantees. This split governance results in siloed planning, incohesive policies, and unaligned funding mechanisms and program eligibility requirements. Ultimately, providers and families are left to navigate this disjointed system. Some of the more challenging symptoms of this structure include:

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- ***Disaggregated accountability and decision making:*** The current split ownership of the early childhood system does not allow for the ECEC footprint to be intentionally designed toward the State’s overarching needs or goals, resulting in the inequitable distribution of service availability that currently exists. Furthermore, the multiple separate data systems that have been built for the siloed early childhood programs are not integrated to effectively inform equitable decision making and funding. Ultimately, state policymakers cannot allocate resources in a way that generates greater equity in access to high-quality ECEC services because they cannot see the full picture, and because of this the early childhood system lacks comprehensive transparency and accountability as well. At the community level, there is typically no entity that has responsibility for planning comprehensively for ECEC services, leading in some communities to disruptions when new “competing” programs are open where services already exist, and in other communities to decades of inertia in the face of significant service shortages.
- ***Instability for providers:*** Many providers offer services managed by multiple agencies and receive multiple funding streams with incongruous accountability and reporting requirements. Providers are left to meet various standards within their programs depending on funding stream requirements, which at best are unaligned but often are incompatible, and result in inequitable services because of the different demands and expectations of services required due to the specific grant/funding source (e.g. PFA vs other). Funding mechanisms are complex, making the system incredibly burdensome and often impossible for providers to work within. Major state-administered funding streams are provided as reimbursements and/or are subject to long payment delays, leaving providers struggling to make ends meet. They simply do not receive enough funding in a timely, consistent manner.
- ***A growing workforce crisis:*** The low compensation of early childhood education and care professionals has led to a severe and growing shortage of qualified staff for ECEC programs. Directors of child care centers, Head Start and home visiting programs and school district preschool programs all report that filling vacancies has become exceedingly difficult,<sup>4</sup> and implementing key equity-focused strategies such as the requirement that English Learners in Preschool for All be taught by teachers with a Professional Educator’s License with a bilingual endorsement has been significantly hampered by too-slow growth in the number of teachers with these qualifications. Indeed, the number of students completing degrees in Early Childhood Education and related fields has been decreasing rather than increasing in recent years<sup>5</sup>, a trend that

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<sup>4</sup> Main, C. and Yarbrough, K.W. (2018) *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for the State of Illinois*. Chicago, IL, Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development and University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Illinois Board of Higher Education (2018). *The college enrollment and completion patterns of Gateways Credential holders*. Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

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must be reversed if the field is to grow to provide access for all families that want and need services.

- ***Challenges for families to navigate the system:*** Parents/guardians of young children are essentially left to navigate this incoherent system on their own. There is no single source of information about ECEC options for families, and families must navigate the current disjointed system without full transparency or a cohesive support structure. Lack of a unified set of quality standards or accountability mechanisms limits a family’s ability to know where quality options exist, what options are available to help them afford ECEC, and what level of quality available services provide. This is even more burdensome for families who don’t speak English as a first language, which could be compounded further if there is dependence on literacy and/or technological skills.

Absent an articulated funding goal, absent a long-term, unified, planning and policy infrastructure, and absent the development of an inextricably linked funding and accountability system, policymakers in Illinois cannot address our state’s inequities and insufficiencies in ECEC. Our providers deserve better, our children and their families deserve better, our ECEC workforce deserves better, and our State deserves better. The Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding – through its charge – has been positioned to make recommendations to the Governor to address these issues for the benefit of Illinois’ children and families.

## The Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding

### **The Commission’s Charge and Guiding Principles**

In December 2019, Governor Pritzker established the Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding (“Early Childhood Funding Commission” or “Commission”) to address the systemic challenges facing Illinois’ ECEC system and make recommendations to improve equitable access to high quality ECEC services for all families in Illinois. The purpose of the Commission, and the purpose of its recommendations, is to recognize the fundamental challenges present in the current system, to identify the root causes of those challenges, and to recommend fundamental changes that can lay a foundation for an equitable system that can better serve children and their families, providers, ECEC professionals and staff, and communities, and ultimately produce better outcomes for children.

The Commission’s charge established by Governor Pritzker is to *study and make recommendations to establish funding goals and funding mechanisms to provide equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services for all children birth to age five and advise the Governor in planning and implementing these recommendations.* Distilling this down, there are several key components of work to deliver on this charge.

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1. Funding Goals: How much **increased investment** is required to reach **funding adequacy** across the state for early childhood education and care?
2. Funding Mechanism: How should the **system of funding** be redesigned to promote the Commission's Guiding Principles?
3. Implementation: How should **management & oversight** be structured to implement the new system of funding?

The Commission has grounded its work in its Guiding Principles, which reflect the Commission's values and beliefs, guided how it operated, and laid a foundation for decision-making. These are:

- **High Quality ECEC is a Public Priority.** It should be invested in as such as this is critical to our State's workforce, economy, and welfare of its residents.
- **Ensure Equity.** We will endorse a system that ensures equitable outcomes for children, with intentional focus on race, ethnicity, culture, home language, income, children's individual needs, and geography.
- **Embrace Bold System-Level Changes.** Everything is on the table, including how funding flows, how funding decisions are made, and who makes them, to better serve all children and families.
- **Build Upon the Solid Foundation.** We will build upon the successes of Illinois' past and current system, its commitment to a prenatal-to-five system, the lessons from other states, and the expertise and research in the field.
- **Prioritize Family Perspectives, Needs, and Choices.** We will prioritize families' perspectives, needs, and choices as we make recommendations to improve the system.
- **Design for Stability and Sustainability.** We recognize our system must provide funding stability for providers, educators, and staff across mixed delivery settings to better serve families. The system must embrace flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and family needs and must possess the human and technical capacity to do so.
- **Require System Transparency, Efficiency, and Accountability.** We see these as necessary conditions for all stakeholders, funding distributors, and funding recipients for any future ECEC funding structure.
- **Recognize Implementation Realities.** We will plan for meaningful change over a multi-year time horizon. We will respond to disruptions in the system to meet the reality of changing needs.

### **The Commission's Scope**

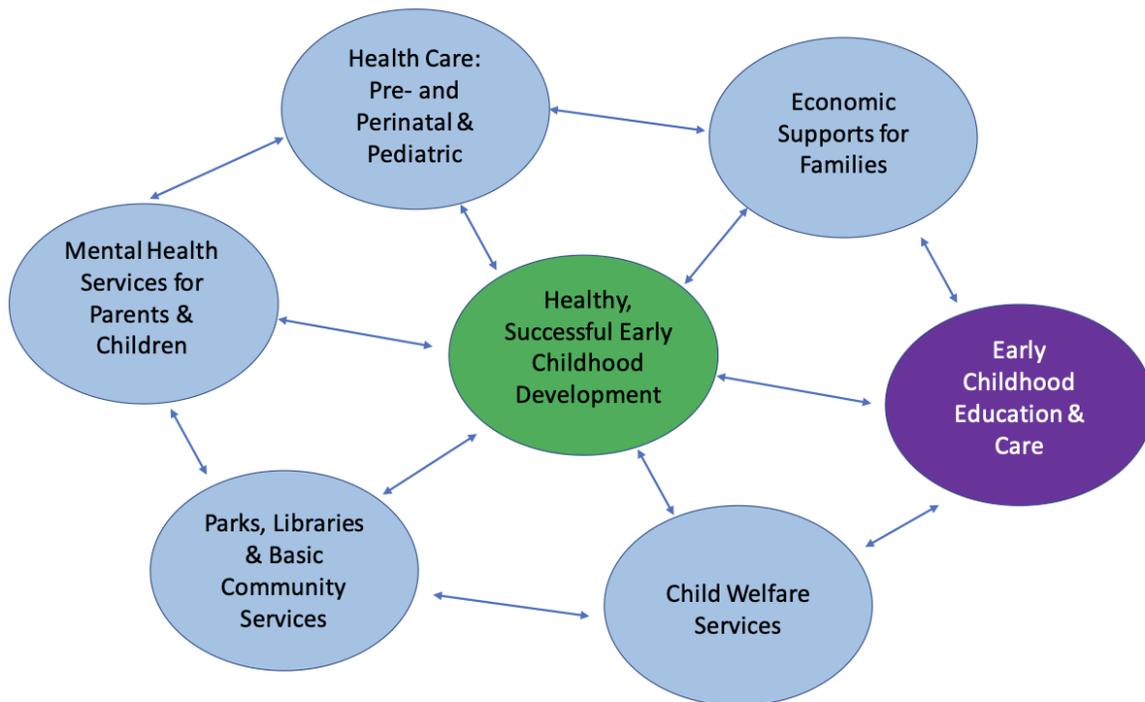
The State of Illinois provides a wide range of services that collectively aim to provide the comprehensive supports needed for strong, healthy families and successful early childhood development. These services, in addition to Early Childhood Education and Care, include and are not limited to: pre/perinatal and pediatric health care, mental health services for children and parents, child welfare services, parks, libraries, and basic community services, and more. This Commission is focusing specifically on the Early Childhood Education & Care system, which fits

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within this broader ecosystem of comprehensive early childhood development supports, and includes:

- Home visiting (Parent coaching and support)
- Child care centers and homes
- Child care subsidies that make care more affordable
- Preschool, including Illinois' Preschool for All program
- Supports for Family, Friend, and Neighbor care
- Head Start and Early Head Start centers and services
- Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers with or at risk of disabilities and delays
- Early Childhood Special Education for pre-school aged children with disabilities



While the focus of this Commission is on ECEC services, we acknowledge that ECEC alone will not solve for the challenges facing families and children, especially those that have been historically underserved. However, it is a critical component that, when more unified, can better engage with the broader comprehensive early development system and move the state forward toward its vision of being the best state in the country for children and families.

### Context and the Imperative for Racial Equity

It is important to share the context within which this Commission undertook its work. Notably, as the Commission began its work in December 2019, the country and indeed the world, was on the precipice of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic downturn that ensued. This was then compounded by a reckoning with the reality of racial injustice, especially as evidenced by events of police brutality unfolding over the course of 2020. These events

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challenged the country to come to grips with the depth of racial injustice baked into our society. As we reckon with this as a state – we must also reckon with it within the early childhood education and care system. While far from complete, the Commission has attempted to include racial equity as a critical lens through which its recommendations are being put forward. The Commission’s approach included:

- Conducting an analysis of the ECEC system by geography and by race (to the extent possible with existing data), which helped form the foundation of and purpose for the Commission.
- Adopting the Early Learning Council's definition of racial equity, which is as follows:  
*A racially equitable society values and embraces all racial/ethnic identities. In such a society, one’s racial/ethnic identity (particularly Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian) is not a factor in an individual’s ability to prosper.*  
*An early learning system that is racially equitable is driven by data and ensures that:*
  - *Every young child and family regardless of race, ethnicity, home language, and social circumstance has everything s/he/they need to develop optimally;*
  - *Resources, opportunities, rewards, and burdens are fairly distributed across groups and communities, so they are supported and not further disadvantaged;*  
*and*
  - *Systems and policies are designed, reframed, or eliminated to promote greater justice for children and families.*
- Creating the Racial Equity Working Group, engaging philanthropically supported consultation with Chicago United for Equity, and executing an analysis inspired by a Racial Equity Impact Assessment, reviewing the Commission’s draft recommendations and developing recommendations for implementation and accountability to promote racial equity.
- Re-considering all recommendations through the framing provided by the Racial Equity Working Group before putting them forward from this Commission.

This work has resulted in several findings that have been incorporated throughout this report. Chief among them is the recognition that a racial equity lens must be baked into the State’s decision-making process from the beginning. Making recommendations and evaluating their racial equity merit afterwards, rather than building racial equity into the recommendation development process from the beginning, threatens to exacerbate inequities. In addition, high-quality early childhood services, no matter how equitably distributed, cannot by themselves address the problems of systemic and structural racial inequities. Building a racially equitable ECEC system is necessary but insufficient; it is just one in a series of critical steps the state must take to reckon with racial and ethnic inequity in Illinois and build a racially just future for the state. These recommendations must be a part of a larger set of strategies across systems to address inequities in the state and disrupt institutional structures that perpetuate inequities.

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Furthermore, creating racial equity in early childhood education and care must involve close collaboration with and action from other systems outside of early childhood.

Moving forward, there are three things the State must commit to in order to advance racial equity in the Commission's recommendations: prioritizing racial equity in the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, conducting meaningful stakeholder engagement (in a variety of languages) in decision-making at the program, community, and state levels, and creating an accountability and reporting process throughout implementation, including conducting racial equity impact analyses. We will discuss these further in our recommendations and implementation considerations.

### Summary of Recommendations

The Commission's charge is to improve equitable access to high quality ECEC services for all families in Illinois. Foundational to this is aligning on the definition of "equitable access" and an understanding of what "high quality" entails. What do we envision for children and families in the long-term? Said simply: A better, simpler, fairer system that serves more children and meets their individual needs and strengths.

As a Commission, we envision a future where high-quality ECEC is available and accessible in all communities, especially in communities that have traditionally been underserved and under-resourced, including communities of color and rural communities. Equally important, it is available and accessible to children with specialized needs, such as those needing early intervention or special education services. For children and families speaking a language other than English at home, it is designed to support children's development of both their home language and English, maximizing the significant benefits of multilingualism/multiculturalism. Services are designed to support each child's growth and development and to accommodate parents/guardians' need for children to be cared for while parents/guardians are at work, and as a result, employers and communities experience greater productivity and are thriving because parents/guardians have reliable child care. **Equitable access means high-quality ECEC is *affordable, accessible, available, accommodating, and accepting of all who need it.*** Creating equitable access requires engaging and involving the beneficiaries most impacted by the ECEC system in its redesign and ensuring transparency throughout. In summary, high-quality ECEC meets children and families where they are and provides them with services they need to grow and develop.

**To build this future, we need to lay a stronger foundation for the state's ECEC system.** We need to fix the ECEC system's financial "plumbing" so that existing and new funding, including federal funding, can flow more smoothly and equitably to providers, families, and communities. And we need to do so in a way that prioritizes uplifting and investing in families and communities where

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there are the greatest disparities in access to high-quality services – disparities borne often from racially inequitable or burdensome policies and practices that reward those families and communities who already have the most resources. A system that equitably distributes public resources and provides equitable access to high-quality ECEC will require:

- Unified policy leadership
- Systemwide data and capacity for analysis to inform planning, including disaggregation by race/ethnicity, home language, and disability
- Community-level infrastructure for listening and engagement, planning, and assisting parents/guardians in navigating the system, including in different languages
- One set of tiered quality standards and an accountability system linked to the centralized funding system
- Unified quality improvement supports
- One authority for providers, implementing a coherent monitoring system
- Unified professional and workforce development
- One voice of collaboration across other areas of early childhood development
- Intentional and responsive inclusion of Head Start/Early Head Start grantees in the planning and implementation of the system, acknowledging the unique federal-to-local design of the Head Start system

This Commission offers recommendations that will allow for the development of this future system, including how to operationalize the vision and make it sustainable. We acknowledge the weight of these recommendations – they are a heavy lift, especially in light of the state’s current economic realities. But we also acknowledge the significance and imperativeness of our charge, which has been clearly illuminated through this past year’s reckoning with racial and economic injustice. With this as context, the Commission offers the following key recommendations:

- **Use this Commission’s articulated, long-term funding goal in policymaking.** The long-term goal articulated by the Commission conveys the level of investment that is adequate, how current funding compares, and can provide insight as to how Illinois should prioritize investments to achieve the funding goal. This allows policy makers and state leadership to understand where we are relative to where we need to go.
- **Centralize and coordinate Illinois’ ECEC funding system.** The Commission recommends centralizing state appropriations and federal funding that is currently spread across three state agencies. This will allow policy makers and state leadership to send money to where it is most needed, and it provides for greater predictability and stability for providers, inherently creating better services for children.
- **Centralize Illinois’ ECEC systems into one newly created Early Childhood Education and Care state agency.** The Commission recommends centralizing ECEC into one newly formed state agency dedicated to ECEC with designated community and regional

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structures. Centralization into a new agency with designated community and regional infrastructure is a critical step to achieving all other Commission recommendations. In fulfillment of the Commission's charge, these recommendations together can create an ECEC system where there is adequate public funding that flows equitably, transparently, and with stability to providers and communities to support equitable access to high-quality ECEC services for all children birth through age five.

### **Key Recommendation 1: Use this Commission's articulated, long-term funding goal in policymaking**

We understand that articulating a large financial need can seem untimely given the state's economic climate and the financial hardship so many constituents currently feel. However, we are responsible for envisioning a future system that effectively serves all children and families. So many in our state have felt the tremendous challenges of struggling to find high quality care, especially during the current pandemic, and our child care providers are dealing with debilitating instability that is not unique to but rather exacerbated by the pandemic. With this as context, it is critical to have a collective understanding of the true cost of providing high quality ECEC services that meets family needs and respects our providers and workforce as a basis to inform smart policy and investment decisions as we move forward toward our envisioned future. Therefore, this Commission has analyzed and is sharing in this report the estimated cost to adequately fund equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services. This information is critical because it:

- Provides an understanding of where we are as a state compared to where we need to go to reach our goal from a financial investment standpoint
- Sheds light on why close to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Illinois' children are not prepared for Kindergarten and why there is insufficient access to high-quality services
- Makes clear the economic injustice to the ECEC workforce, which is dramatically underpaid
- Provides insight into the hidden costs borne by families, workplaces, school systems and others because of the state's under investment in early childhood education and care
- Acts as a tool, alongside other data, to guide policy and investment decisions in line with a long-term vision of equity and quality
- Prepares the state for the day when funding becomes available federally and within our state

The funding adequacy calculation and funding goal for Illinois is not a budget request for an upcoming legislative cycle, nor is it an unfunded mandate for provider salary and staffing requirements or program models. Rather than proposing a required level of funding in the state

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budget, the funding adequacy calculation is designed to inform a road map, in the context of other data, to help better guide budget decisions in future fiscal years for early childhood education and care. It must be noted that while this work marks a dramatic improvement in the state's understanding of the cost of high quality ECEC, it is not complete and must continue to evolve. There is more work to be done, particularly around the cost of providing Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education services, as well as costs for supportive infrastructure. This will be discussed in the recommendations for next steps.

The following set of guiding values reflect goals of the ECEC community for a high quality early childhood system and are included in the funding adequacy cost model. These values acknowledge the challenges in our current system that require funding to address if we are to put an end to inequities in quality and access and ultimately provide a more accurate estimation of the investment needed to reach a high quality, comprehensive ECEC system. The values include:

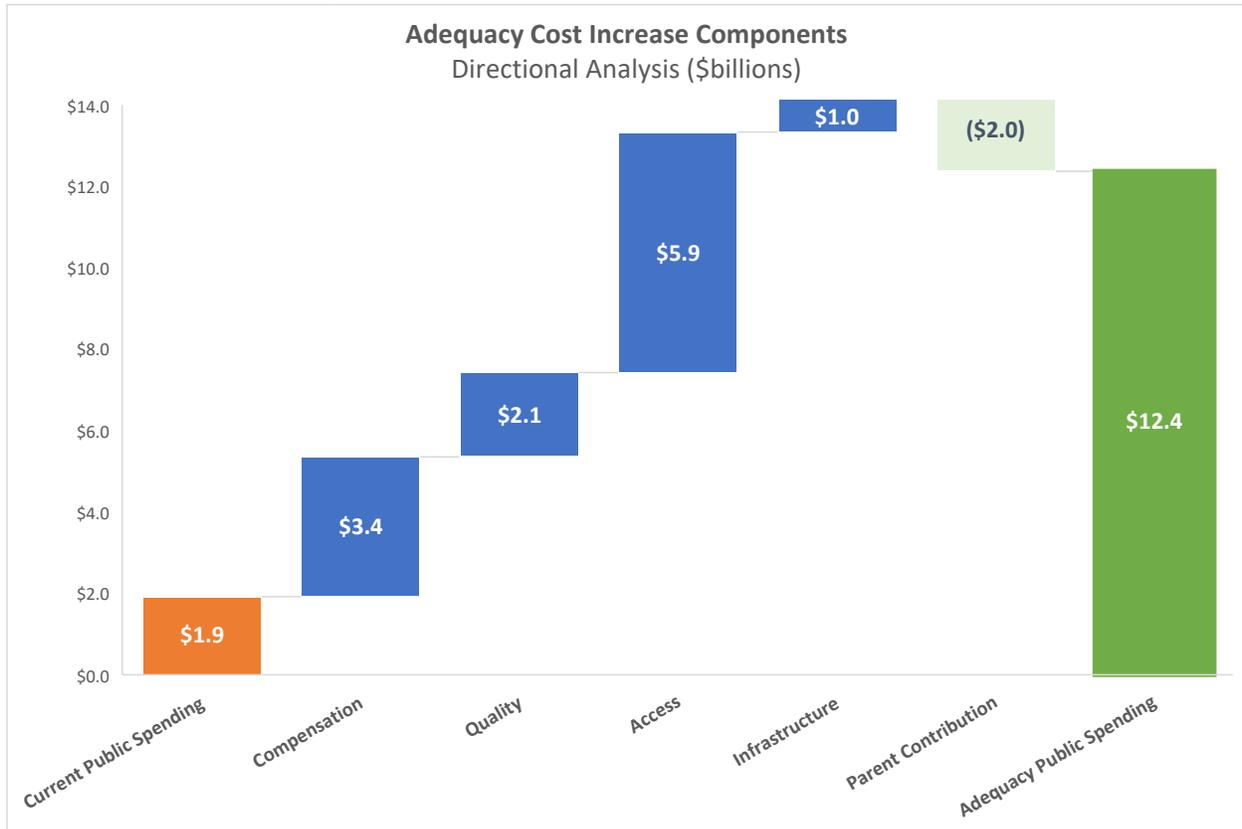
- Program models that meet families' needs and preferences for schedule and setting;
- Program models that provide comprehensive services that are sufficient to address the needs of children who are furthest from opportunity, including those in poverty or experiencing homelessness or child welfare involvement;
- Program models that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and support children's home language development as well as their English language skills, including enhanced compensation for bilingual staff skilled in providing these supports;
- Program models that meet the full range of special needs that young children have and that serve children with disabilities in inclusive settings;
- Parity in compensation and benefits across the profession, commensurate with varying characteristics such as qualifications and role, to ensure highly qualified teachers and staff are hired and retained;
- Staffing patterns that allow for adequate time for teacher's engagement in lesson preparation and collaboration, professional development, parent/guardian engagement, and consultation services;
- Class sizes and staff-to-child ratios that reflect best practice for each age group;
- Adequate infrastructure investment to ensure appropriate quality improvement supports are available as well as opportunities to build a highly qualified workforce.

Unsurprisingly, the current level of state and federal investment in early childhood education and care is insufficient. **Our Commission estimates that the current level of investment from state and federal sources is 14% of the investment necessary to provide high quality services for all families who would seek access.** The total state and federal investment in 2019 was \$1.9B across state and federal services. For comparison, spending in Illinois for children ages 6-18 is seven times higher than this, and Illinois lags behind its midwestern neighbors on early childhood

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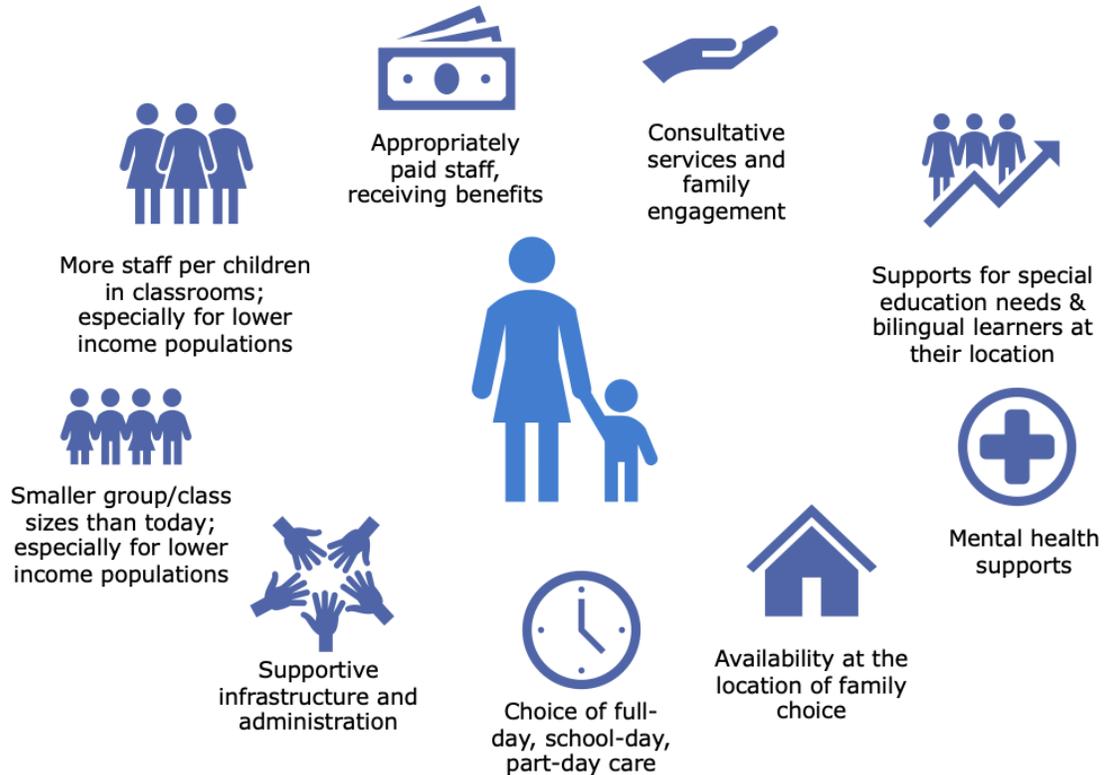
spending per enrolled child. The estimated long-term need is \$12.4B from public sources. We envision families would contribute \$2.0B for a total system adequacy cost of \$14.3B. The cost model report with assumptions and full detail can be found at the link shared in Appendix 3.



With the noted need for further refinement, this directional level of investment would bring to fruition our vision of providing equitable access to high quality early childhood education and care. First, it would provide a high-quality experience for families and children throughout the state. Their experience of the system would be dramatically different, starting with availability at the location of family choice and options for levels of services that fit their unique needs. They would experience smaller class sizes with more staff in center and school district settings, especially for children from lower income backgrounds, and the special education and English learner services that they need at the location that works for them. They would have more intensive family engagement than today and mental health services among other supports. These services would be affordable, at no cost to families with the lowest incomes (at or below 200% of the federal poverty line), and a graduated copayment up to no more than 7% of income for families with middle and higher incomes. This will make all types of programs financially accessible, including to working middle class families and regardless of immigration status. We believe this experience, depicted below, is the experience our children and families need and deserve.

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Accordingly, providers would have an improved experience within the system at this adequate level of funding. They would first and foremost have adequate funding to appropriately pay their workforce leading to lower turnover and more stability, and the ability to create safe, welcoming environments and offer supports their children and families need. Our ECEC workforce would receive the development and training they need and finally receive fair pay commensurate with their valuable contributions. Note that increased compensation is envisioned to come alongside investments in workforce development to ensure existing staff have the opportunity to retain their roles and obtain the education, training and credentials they will need. Adequate compensation for ECEC professionals means lower staff turnover, so educators would be able to build crucial relationships with the young children in their care. These relationships are the key to producing the positive outcomes from high-quality ECEC that we see in the research literature. Smaller group sizes further strengthen these relationships and give ECEC professionals greater opportunities to spot developmental delays and provide personalized supports for each young child. It is critical to reemphasize that nothing within this report or cost model is or should be considered to be an unfunded mandate; instead, we seek to understand the funding necessary to build this future system with high quality, equitable services for all who want them.

This cost estimate has been developed and refined over the past two years based on authentic engagement with stakeholders, contributions and reviews from national experts, and deep data analysis – all in line with the Commission’s Guiding Principles. The full cost model report with significant detail on the assumptions included can be found in Appendix 3. The cost model must

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continue to evolve to serve its purpose as a guiding beacon for investment and policy decisions. Given this, the Commission offers the following recommendations:

- The cost model should be thoroughly updated every four years (at a minimum) in alignment with the Commission's Guiding Principles. An annual update should be conducted for inflationary factors and any material changes, with a particular focus on equity considerations. The cost model should be publicly available with transparent updates. An advisory group with diverse membership representative of the full early childhood field should support this periodic reevaluation of the adequacy estimate. This advisory group should include but not be limited to: providers from all ECEC services, practitioners, teacher and other staff organizations and unions, families experiencing components of the system, national and state early childhood policy experts, state agency financial leadership, and financial modeling personnel.
- The State should conduct more in-depth cost modeling in the next year for Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care services, as these cost models will require more in-depth engagement with providers regarding the cost of high-quality service delivery beyond what could be covered in the Commission.
- The State must more fully understand and incorporate into the model the cost of infrastructure. The cost model currently includes an estimate of 8% of the total system costs to cover expenses such as community and regional infrastructure, state agency personnel, monitoring and regulation systems, workforce recruitment and development, quality improvement and accountability systems, parent/guardian education and engagement, and data and information management systems. This is a significant component of the total cost (\$1B) which must be studied further. This future study must 1) ensure all components of infrastructure are incorporated and 2) determine the cost of these components with consideration of equity, acknowledging capacity building and start-up costs for new programs, and an understanding that many communities have historically seen underinvestment that must be rectified. Furthermore, the study must assess the costs of facility footprint expansion across the mixed delivery system and how these costs may or may not fit within the infrastructure estimate.
- The State should incorporate into the cost model estimated resources to support parental education, parental inclusion and authentic community engagement, and culturally and linguistically responsive services and related professional development.
- The State should undertake a study to assess current local funding capacity and to identify options and incentives for longer term local contributions to adequate funding.

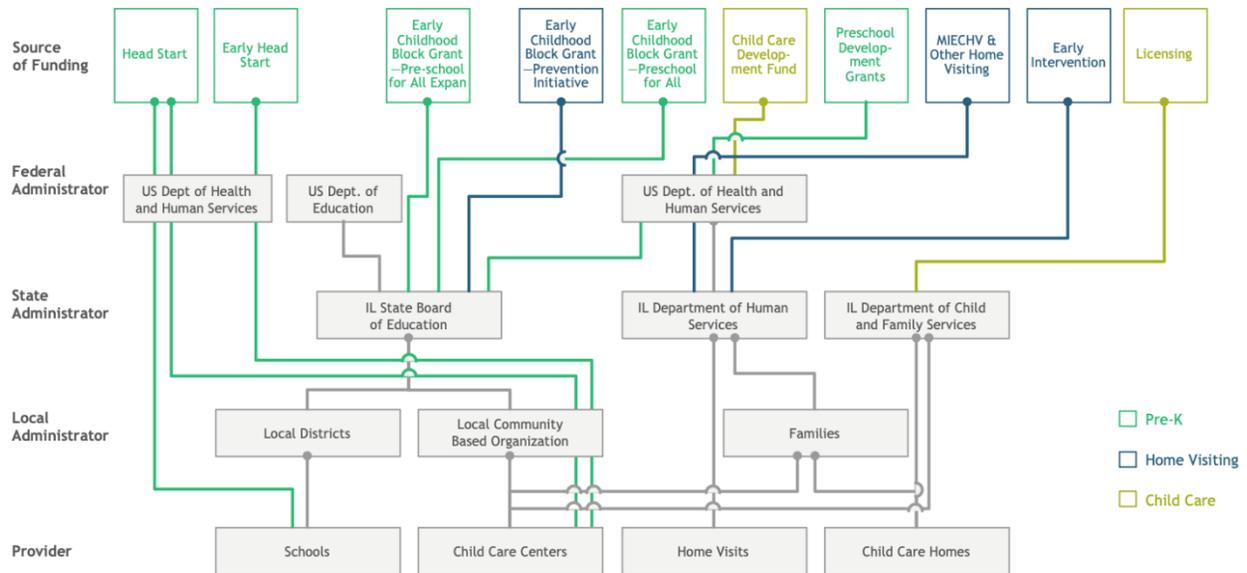
### **Key Recommendation 2: Centralize Illinois' ECEC funding system.**

The Commission is recommending that the early childhood education and care funding sources be administered and leveraged together in a centralized process and distributed from the state

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in new ways. This would be different from the current ECEC funding mechanisms, which are spread across three different state agencies and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, which leads to different policies and processes that providers and families must follow and different funding systems that do not operate on a unified strategy. A centralized system will allow policy makers and state leadership to send funding to where it is most needed, and it will provide for greater predictability and stability for providers, inherently creating better services for children. The complexity of today's funding system is depicted in below:



The **funding sources** that are recommended to be centralized & coordinated are:

- a. Early Childhood Block Grant (State General Revenue)
- b. Child Care Assistance Program (State General Revenue, federal Child Care Development Fund, federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families transfer portion)
- c. Parents Too Soon (State General Revenue)
- d. Healthy Families Illinois (State General Revenue)
- e. Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (federal)

The Commission recognizes that more work must be done to determine if components of funding for English Learners and Early Childhood Special Education within the K12 Evidence-based Funding formula should be centralized and coordinated, as well as federal funds for these supports. A visual depiction of these ECEC funding streams in the current system is shown here:

Furthermore, the Commission recommends that **funding distribution** be conducted in new ways, such as:

- Direct distribution to service providers would be conducted for the following services or some combination therein:

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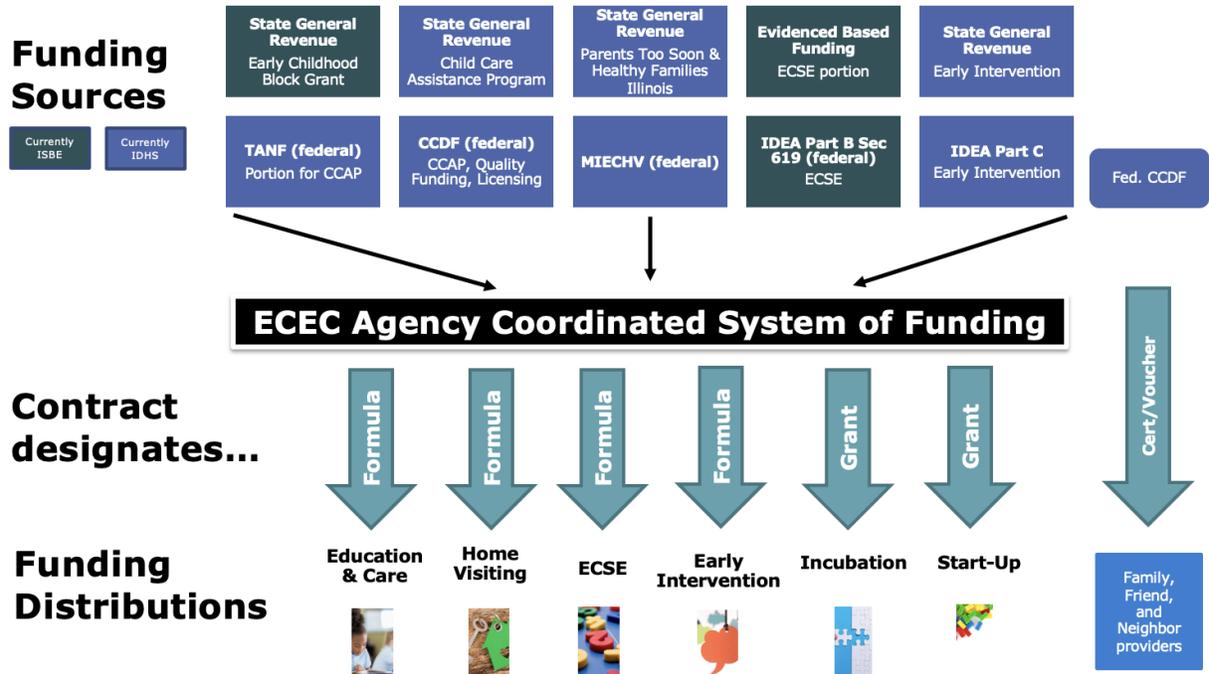
- Education and care (including school, center, and home-based preschool and child care)
- Home visiting
- Program incubation (funding to support planning prior to program opening)
- Program start-up (funding to support costs associated with program opening before reaching capacity)
- Direct distribution to local or regional support entities or service providers would be conducted for the following services or some combination therein:
  - Program incubation (funding to support planning prior to program opening)
  - Workforce and professional development
  - Training and technical assistance
  - Community systems development
  - Data collection and analysis
  - Family and community engagement in system planning and development

The Commission recommends that **funding allocation** be conducted in new ways, with the goal of (i) more stability and consistency for providers receiving funds from the State, so that they can better offer services to families, (ii) more transparency in service of equity in the state's ECEC funding system, and (iii) better complementing the direct federal-to-local investment of Head Start/Early Head Start funding – all things the current fragmented ECEC funding system simply cannot do.

Thus, the Commission recommends that the State transition primarily to a system of **weighted formula-based funding and multi-year contracts to allocate centralized funds to direct service providers, with the expectation that the final system may need to maintain vouchers in some settings**. Requests for Proposals (RFP) for grant funding should be limited to those providers that are 'new' to the system and for support entities or service providers, and must always be designed with racial equity in mind. An equitable distribution of funding that does not privilege those providers with the resources necessary to maneuver a complex funding process can ensure more opportunities for children and families to access services. Below is an example of a system that could meet the Commission's vision for a more equitable and streamlined approach:

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*Education & Care and Home Visiting* direct service funding should be allocated based on per-child or per-classroom formulas that are weighted to more equitably support children and communities with a need for greater investment. Funds should be distributed in advance based on projected enrollments with periodic true-ups based on actual enrollments, alleviating the significant cash flow burden on providers experienced with today’s reimbursement models. Funds should be distributed through longer-term, multi-year contracts that can be reauthorized based on uniform accountability standards rather than recompleted every few years. Funding amounts for support services could be lump sum amounts based on services to be provided.

A statewide formula should be established that allocates funding across services, age groups, and regions of the state. There needs to be a priority in the statewide formula for geographic equity and clear safeguards to ensure that the investment in infants and toddlers continues to grow as the overall investment grows. The state should undertake a review of the appropriate percentage of funds that should be allocated to infants and toddlers and to various regions of the state based upon data about disparities in access. Based upon this, a state formula should direct a proportionate share of funds for children ages birth – three and a proportionate share of funds for regions of the state. The Commission is not recommending ending relationships with current providers in a redistribution of current funding, but rather urging that additional funding in the system should be used to ensure a more equitable distribution, with funds being specifically targeted to children and communities historically receiving disproportionately less state funding.

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**Program Incubation & Start-Up** funding for new providers should be allocated as grants to support expansion of high-quality services and could be made available to providers through targeted, equity-informed Requests for Proposal or other applications. Grants should be targeted to communities in the state that have not seen sufficient investment and resources and so do not have sufficient high-quality services, and adequate supports and technical assistance for potential applicants should be provided to ensure equitable access to funding and effective implementation. An equity-informed RFP should be a relatively uncomplicated process, and the State should ensure technical assistance for all providers to have a chance at a successful application, if they are an appropriate, high-quality provider. Once in the system, the state will work with providers through carefully managed contracts to ensure providers meet and maintain required accountability standards.

**Support services** funding should complement the funding formula described above. Funding for support services (such as workforce and professional development, training and technical assistance, capacity building, and community systems development) should be allocated as grants to support provider capacity and quality. These grants could be made available to providers or entities supporting providers, such as community collaborations or other community or regional infrastructure entities.

Such a system must prioritize continued support for Illinois' mixed delivery ECEC system to preserve family choice, and so the State must prioritize in the contracting and grantmaking process diversity in service location, program model and curriculum type, and representation of the families and communities served. The funding mechanism should also be designed with the recognition that provider capacity building and program incubation and start-up require multiple years to successfully result in more and stronger programs, and therefore such an effort requires a sustained funding commitment that is not tied to enrollment.

As stated above, the primary goals of this future funding system are to provide for greater predictability and stability for providers and to allow policy makers and state leadership to equitably allocate funding. With a funding system as described, the Commission believes these goals can be achieved.

- Because more funds for ongoing operations are allocated up-front via formula, providers will have more stability and ability to plan their services - ultimately providing a more stable environment for children and families. This inherently can lead to attaining better fiscal health. Stable, predictable sources of funding mean providers are more likely to stay in business, invest in quality, and be assured of timely payments. More providers may want to work with the state and thus provide services to eligible families. An equitable distribution of funding that does not privilege those providers with the resources necessary to maneuver a complex funding process can ensure more opportunities for children and families to access services. Finally, with these changes, we

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believe that providers will spend less time on administrative burden and more time focusing on the core mission - serving young children.

- Further, with the funding system as described, the State will attain greater capacity to equitably distribute funding and to understand how all public ECEC funds are invested to support children and families in the state.

The Commission recognizes that a transition toward a more contract-centered system of funding must take place on a thoughtful schedule, over many years as the system becomes more adequately funded, and with significant input from providers and other stakeholders along the way. The transition should begin with those providers that serve primarily low-income families and receive most of their revenue from public sources. We acknowledge that there will likely continue to be a role for certificates (vouchers) in the child care system for many years as the state continues to balance the somewhat competing priorities of providing access to the full market of services, supporting family choice of settings, and ensuring stable funding for high quality services while overall public funding for the system grows. As the state re-evaluates the balance between contracts and certificates it should also look at lessons from other states to see if its contracting and vouchering practices can be improved. Finally, there must be reviews on an ongoing basis to determine whether the new system of funding is meeting its goals.

#### **Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education Services, and Early Childhood English Learner Services within the Centralized Funding System**

To foster equity in the early childhood education and care system, the State must support equitable access to high-quality Early Intervention (EI) and Early Childhood Special Education services (ECSE) and supports for Early Childhood English Learners (EL) and their families. For inclusion, funding mechanism and funding goals should be written such that all children who are eligible for services should be able to receive them in a way that meets their needs and the needs of their families across a continuum of settings in home, schools, and community-based providers. More study is urgently needed to determine how governance and mechanism structures can best support this equitable access and this must be prioritized.

A notable challenge that makes ECSE, EI, and EL distinct from other ECEC services is the prevalence of federal funding and the fact that they are an entitlement subject to federal law and oversight. In addition, these programs are intertwined with other systems (such as K-12, Medicaid, and local funding streams). While much work has been done by the Commission, consideration of more dramatic changes to the system will require involvement of a greater number of stakeholders, including families, providers, unions that represent teachers, paraprofessionals, and clinicians, and state and national experts. Here we share progress made in understanding challenges in the current ECSE and EI systems and the current approach to supporting English Learners, goals of the future system, and hypotheses of how future mechanism structures could help meet those goals.

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### **Early Childhood Special Education**

The State must further define how to best provide Early Childhood Special Education services (funded by federal IDEA Part B Section 619, State Evidence-Based Funding (EBF), Medicaid, and local funds) for children ages 3-5 wherever they are in the mixed delivery system, at the location of family choice, consistent with Least Restrictive Environment, and informed by their Individualized Education Plan team which may also include home language services for ELs. The Commission therefore recommends the state move forward immediately after this Commission concludes with a study on providing ECSE services in the mixed delivery system and the funding mechanisms and governance structures that can best support such an inclusive system.

Currently, children ages 3-5 with IEPs are primarily served by the school district in which they reside, as the local education agency is accountable for providing these services (although there is confusion about accountability for children that attend child care and community based preschool programs outside of their school district of residence). This means many children are not being supported at the location of family choice or where the child is receiving general ECEC services. In practicality, it means that many children are transported from their child care location to the school district for services as prescribed in the IEP, or families end up foregoing work opportunities to accommodate the limited schedule of school-based services, or children do not receive the services to which they are entitled. The system as it operates now is inherently not child-centered or responsive to family needs.

Funding, program model, and oversight structures are not in place today to enable the mixed delivery system to provide ECSE supports at a system-wide level. There is no direct funding outside of school districts (to which IDEA and EBF funding flows), there is a lack of understanding of the true costs of ECSE services, and there is inadequate targeted funding for ECSE despite the requirement to provide services, which leads to frustration within school districts as costs create pressure against general K12 funding. Head Start programs, which have a federal mandate to include children with disabilities and ensure that they make up at least 10% of their enrollment have faced challenges for decades in their efforts to partner with school districts to provide needed special education services for children with disabilities within their settings. The same is true for community based PI/PFA/PFAE programs and child care providers, all of whom are required to prioritize enrollment of children with disabilities. Finally, there needs to be alignment across the sector on incentivizing providing services in the Least Restrictive Environment and ramifications on a mixed delivery system design, as well as thorough discussion on the feasibility of any mandates and the cost to implement. All of this must be considered in the context of moving toward adequate funding for ECSE services but acknowledging that funding increases may not immediately materialize.

The Commission offers up priorities for the future system for consideration. First and foremost, the Commission recommends serving children at the location of family choice. Children who

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attend community based programs, including Head Start and state-funded PreK and child care, should have that location be the first place considered to receive services when they are referred and identified as eligible for special education and related services. Families with children with special needs must have real options for ECSE services that meet their needs, including full-work-day, year-round care where needed to support the parents/guardians' work schedules. In addition to this, priorities include: providing transparency on true cost of services in comparison to funding available, equitably allocating resources based on individual student needs, promoting continuity of services between EI and ECSE as well as between ECSE and general ECEC services and Kindergarten, ensuring availability of appropriate linguistic supports for English Learners with special education needs, and finally, being mindful of administrative challenges for providers in the development of future funding, program models, and oversight systems.

As part of further study, the Commission recommends consideration of potential regional/community intermediary structures, for those LEAs who opt in, to facilitate funding and service delivery. Given that LEAs receive funding per IDEA and retain accountability, but with the desire to provide services in the mixed delivery system, an intermediary may be able to coordinate between entities to ensure all children are served. An intermediary structure could also allow LEAs to optionally pool funds to provide services to children outside of district settings, which may be particularly helpful to smaller LEAs that could not feasibly provide itinerant services or specialized services (for example, providing specialized services in less common languages). Again, this is *an option* that the Commission believes warrants further study.

While further study is underway, the Commission believes that Early Childhood Special Education should remain in K-12 Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) with the goal of integration into a single, unified ECEC system if and when feasible and appropriate. Meanwhile, the Commission recommends that the cost factors associated with ECSE within EBF be reviewed by the EBF Professional Review Panel to address the Commission's finding that it does not appropriately reflect ECSE costs and determine ramifications on EBF based on adjustments that may be needed. Specifically, the ratio of SPED teachers to PreK students behind the cost factor for SPED teachers must be reviewed.

#### **Early Intervention**

Similar to ECSE, the Commission understands there are challenges in the current Early Intervention system that, at least in part, may stem from today's funding mechanisms. The State must evaluate options for an Early Intervention system of payments (funded by federal IDEA Part C, Medicaid, State General Revenue, private insurance, and private co-pay) that can maximize the use of all available dollars to improve service delivery and therefore the family experience. In

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particular, funding mechanisms should incentivize smooth and seamless family service delivery, effective training, practice-based coaching and reflective supervision, collaboration amongst providers, smooth transitions between EI and receiving programs, and recruitment and retention of qualified service providers. The Commission therefore recommends further study on mechanisms that may best incentivize these priorities, including evaluating the potential for and ramifications of a contract-based system or hybrid approach – conceptually similar to that being proposed for general ECEC services. Contracts could be considered as a potential opportunity to promote quality and accountability while also offering more stability to providers by providing up-front payment as opposed to reimbursements. Learnings from current state practices as well as from other states, input from myriad diverse providers and EI professionals, and family input should be gathered and considered as part of this study. Additionally, questions on implementation challenges, such as private insurance billing and Medicaid reimbursements, will need to be understood. Additional options should be considered to provide more timely payments for providers, tiered reimbursement, and other retention and recruitment strategies.

Changes in funding mechanisms, however, must be coupled with increases in funding to move toward funding adequacy. More families need services, with the State currently serving far fewer children than those who may be eligible under federal guidelines. Illinois' EI system is serving only about 1% of children under one year of age in the EI system, and enrolls too few infants and toddlers who are eligible due to medical diagnosis and conditions and who meet the State's at-risk criteria. In order to reach and provide services to substantially more families, current providers must be incentivized to stay in the system and increase their presence, as well as encouraging more providers to opt in. There is also a noted equity issue today as thousands of children remain unidentified or on waiting lists for services, with challenges ensuring services are available in historically underserved communities including racially, ethnically, or linguistically diverse, high poverty, and rural communities as well as populations with high mobility and complex needs, including children experiencing homelessness and who are child welfare involved. Innovative approaches to the service delivery model, including specialized teams, should be considered to address these disparities, in addition to making telehealth a permanent service modality option. In addition to the need to address our service delivery barriers cited above, which require modified and innovative approaches to funding mechanisms, we must also increase provider pay to attract and retain more providers where our service delays are due to provider shortages, and to incentivize and support providers to engage families who are historically under-identified. The call for more funding to address these needs is included in the funding adequacy cost model described in this document.

These recommendations indicate progress made on cataloguing and synthesizing challenges within the current funding mechanisms for the ECSE and EI services and the potential downstream effects of any large-scale changes to those funding mechanisms. Much more remains to be unpacked through continued study and dialogue. Ultimately, the State must

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define the funding mechanism parameters and governance structures that transparently and effectively support providers and families in meeting individual child and family needs in a high-quality, accessible and inclusive setting for children with disabilities.

#### **Early Childhood English Learner Services**

Moving forward, the State must determine the most appropriate funding mechanism to support English Learners. English learners make up close to one-third of Illinois' preschool population. There are state and federal requirements in overseeing English Learner education and state and federal funding sources that support English Learners. Currently, some funds for English Learners in preschool are distributed to school districts through EBF. However, the Commission did not grapple with whether EC EL should stay within EBF or be centralized with other ECEC funding. Further analysis and study are recommended to better understand the implications of these options. Future consideration should also be given to program evaluation and how English Learner early childhood education and care programs and services will align with K-12 English Learners services in a future system of funding and governance.

Services for English Learners in Illinois (as defined in Article 14C of the Illinois School Code and Part 228 of the Administrative Code) have been extended to pre-school ELs who are served in programs funded by the state, such as PFA. The spirit of Article 14C should permeate throughout all of Illinois' ECEC system including all services for children birth through age two as well as the state's Head Start and Early Head Start programs. For this reason, the cost model completed for the Commission includes a salary premium for bilingual teachers in both school and community-based ECEC settings. Every effort should be made to acknowledge that children enter these settings with linguistic assets in different home languages that should be nurtured and capitalized upon while these children are acquiring English.

#### **Key Recommendation 3: Centralize Illinois' ECEC systems into one newly formed Early Childhood Education and Care state agency.<sup>6</sup>**

The Commission weighed different options for unifying the ECEC system: fostering greater coordination across the various state agencies involved in ECEC; consolidating ECEC within the Illinois Department of Human Services or the Illinois State Board of Education; or creation of a new state ECEC agency. Research and discussions with other states as well as analysis of Illinois' own unique historical, political, and fiscal context surfaced both challenges and opportunities associated with each of these options.

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<sup>6</sup> There was agreement among all Commissioners that early childhood agency functions should be consolidated and centralized. However, the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) did not support the recommendation to create a new agency at this time.

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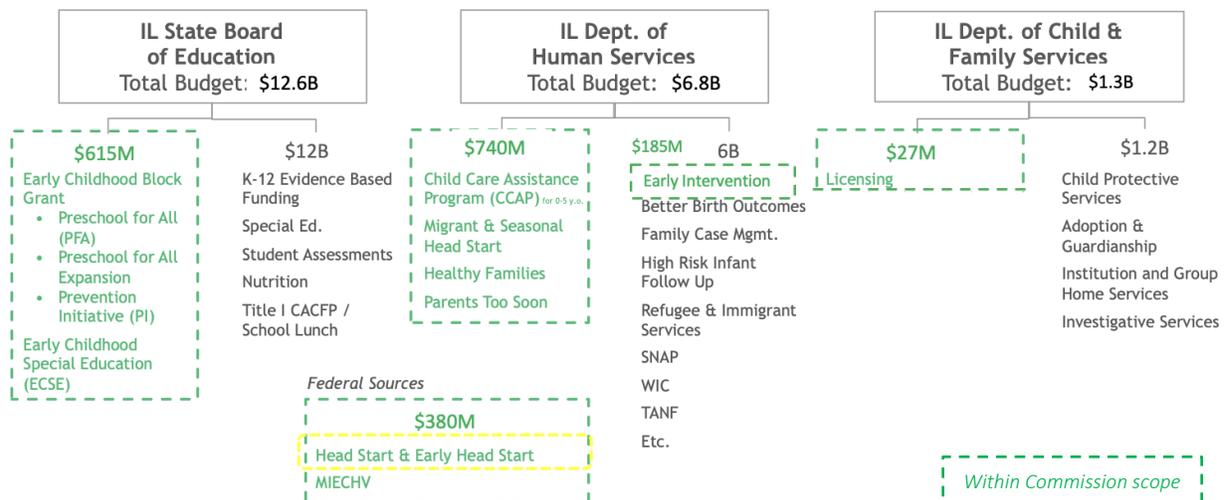
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The Commission’s deliberations resulted in the recommendation to centralize state agency functions in one newly created state agency dedicated to ECEC with designed community and regional infrastructure. After much research, interviews with other states, engagement with stakeholders, and discussion, the Commission concluded that a new agency focused solely on ECEC would elevate early childhood issues and policy matters, create an organization with a clear, focused ECEC mission, create a voice for early childhood at the state cabinet level, better attract leadership and staff, and allow for the creation of culture built to support children, families, providers, and the ECEC workforce. Additionally, centralizing into a new agency will allow for implementation of the full suite of this Commission’s recommendations.

Centralization into a new agency would bring together many programs that are currently embedded within three state agencies:

- ISBE’s Early Childhood Block Grant – Preschool for All, Preschool for All Expansion, Prevention Initiative
- IDHS’s Child Care Assistance Program
- Home Visiting, housed at IDHS – MIECHV, Healthy Families, Parents Too Soon
- IDHS’s Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start Migrant Services, and the State’s relationship with Head Start
- IDHS’s Early Intervention
- DCFS’s Day Care Licensing
- The Commission recommends further study to evaluate whether ISBE’s Early Childhood Special Education and Early Childhood English Learner supports should also be centralized in this new agency.

2020 allocations



While the formation of a new agency has great potential for Illinois’ ECEC system, the Commission recognizes that there are many specific questions to be answered, policies to be developed, and issues to be worked through prior to implementation. This would include fully assessing the impact on priority populations and determining policies related to things such as

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quality standards and accountability, teacher licensure, coordination with other state agencies (including ISBE), maintaining supports for children with special needs and English Learners, and others.

Centralizing management and oversight of ECEC into one newly formed state agency allows for the articulated requirements of the envisioned ECEC system to be put into operation, such as:

- Unified policy leadership
- Systemwide data and capacity for analysis to inform planning, including disaggregation by race/ethnicity, home language, and disability
- Community-level infrastructure for listening and engagement, planning, and assisting families in navigating the system
- One set of tiered quality standards and an accountability system linked to the centralized funding system
- Unified quality improvement supports
- One coherent monitoring system for providers to be accountable to
- Unified professional and workforce development
- One voice of collaboration across other areas of early childhood development
- Intentional and responsive inclusion of Head Start/Early Head Start grantees in the planning and implementation of the system, acknowledging the unique federal-to-local design of the Head Start system

The Commission believes that the new ECEC state agency must drive our system toward equitable outcomes for young children and for their families and communities. It must intentionally focus on racial and ethnic disparities, income disparities, language, culture, geography, and age. It must ensure that supporting children with disabilities and English learners is foundational to the system. It requires rooting out racism and dismantling existing systems of oppression that produce inequitable outcomes. It requires transforming policies and practices through application of a racial equity framework to reconcile past harms, establish guardrails against reproducing inequity, and lead to the development and execution of all other capacities that help children thrive.

**The Commission recommends a community and regional infrastructure to meet the Commission's vision for the system and ensure that input from families, providers, and the local ECEC workforce forms the basis of decision making.** While the Commission recommends a centralized state agency, we also acknowledge that the future system can only be successful if it is a true collaboration and partnership between the state and communities and is built to address the unique needs of those communities. Community-driven planning via stakeholder engagement at the local level, using community data, can fuel distribution of funds for provider incubation, training and technical assistance, and further family engagement. A community and

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regional infrastructure would provide capacity to collect and analyze data at the local/regional level to inform policy and planning. It would also enable family engagement, outreach, and support for families' navigating the system at the local level. All of this must be done with a racial equity lens to best support families, educators, providers, and communities of color in building the capacity and infrastructure needed to provide equitable access to high-quality ECEC services.

Finally, the Commission recommends the state should develop and implement a report to be published annually with information about the distribution of state funding, provision of services, access to quality service options across the state, and state progress toward Commission recommendations.

#### **Agency Capacities – what will the state agency do?**

This early childhood agency should be charged with carrying out the functions of policy leadership, funding & oversight, infrastructure buildout and support, and communications in collaboration with entities at the regional or local levels. The agency's functions will include:

- **Policy Leadership**
  - Set and maintain statewide vision, goals, and priorities that drive equitable access to high-quality ECEC and equitable outcomes for children and families. Use periodic systemwide equity audits to inform statewide goals and priorities.
  - Set early learning standards and guidelines and tiered program quality standards based on the science of early childhood development and informed by anti-racist approaches and the families and providers directly impacted by the standards and guidelines.
  - Develop and implement system policies, rules, and regulations (including budget) based on diverse family, community, provider, and ECEC workforce perspectives and needs and in response to system gaps and disparities. This will require reconciliation and integration of regulations for all ECEC programs, with special attention to the role of the federally-controlled Head Start/Early Head Start program in our state's early childhood program.
  - Coordinate with other child- and family-serving state agencies, including health, human services, child welfare and education agencies, to ensure comprehensive and responsive supports for families.
  - Coordinate and engage ECEC system advisory bodies. This may include consolidating existing ECEC advisory bodies or creating new bodies if needed to engage the voices of families, providers, the ECEC workforce, and communities and to seek input from state agency leaders, advocates, researchers, and other entities across the comprehensive early development field.
- **Funding & Oversight**

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- Use data and community perspectives to drive the budgeting process, including periodically updating the ECEC funding adequacy model with input and support from advisory bodies.
- Make funding allocation decisions that ensure equitable allocation of resources and equitable access to quality services. This includes:
  - Using equity audit, accountability measures, and stakeholder input to inform funding distribution policy and quality improvement policy
  - Creating funding allocation rules and policies with involvement from and in collaboration with regional and local ECEC entity representatives and in consultation with ECEC stakeholders with local knowledge of ECEC supply and demand
  - Designing and administering targeted, equity-informed competitive bid RFP process for new system entrants (with funding allocation for adequate provider supports for responding to RFPs)
- Administer equitable funding distribution mechanisms by designing and administering long-term contracting processes for existing ECEC public funding recipients which specifies services to be provided, number of children to be served, and geography to serve.
- Conduct licensing, contracting, monitoring and compliance oversight designed to support equitable outcomes for all children. This includes:
  - Conducting contract reauthorization through a uniform accountability process that is state led and regionally informed.
  - Considering contract modifications within contract term and/or at contract renewal for the types of services provided, number of children served, and geography served.
  - Implementing a cycle of analysis, evaluation, and honing of the process to ensure equity and effectiveness of services.
- **Infrastructure**
  - Develop leadership capacity to implement improvements to the ECEC system
  - Integrate, align, and standardize data systems across early childhood education and care to facilitate comprehensive, data-informed policy and decision making. Collect, analyze, and evaluate systemwide disaggregated data including conducting periodic system equity audits of funding and access to high-quality ECEC services and outcomes. Data analysis, research and evaluation should be a significant function of the new agency. Data should be disaggregated by race, home language, children with special needs, geography, and income, and must be readily available for decision making.
  - Manage system-level continuous quality improvement by setting and executing on a vision for continuous quality improvement across the ECEC system. This requires rationalizing various ECEC licensing, monitoring, quality, and quality improvement incentive structures in service of this vision. Specific consideration

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needs to be given to the licensing impact on kindergarten and early childhood special education teachers within a professional educator licensing system that has experienced multiple changes over the last few years.

- Set and execute a vision for comprehensive, equity-informed workforce and professional development across the ECEC system to support greater diversity and representation in the early childhood workforce including specific skill sets such as language competencies. Reconcile and integrate professional development and workforce regulations and qualifications across the ECEC system. Administer professional development and workforce development, including through contracts with intermediary organizations as well as teacher recruitment through grass roots efforts.
- Use equity data to inform investments to cultivate high-quality provider options for targeted populations, make grants available for incubation and start-up support via a targeted, equity-informed RFP process led by the state agency and informed by regional entities, and implement cycle of analysis, evaluation, and honing of the process, built in partnership with communities, to ensure equity.
- **Communications and Partnership**
  - Regularly report systemwide progress toward equitable access, quality, and outcomes, including development and use of a statewide and regionally disaggregated ECEC equity report card.
  - Engage stakeholders and provide clear information by leveraging regional and local entities as hubs for communication, local input / decision-making, community systems development, coordinated intake, and other supportive infrastructure.
  - Create equitable and inclusive opportunities for collaborative decision-making with families, providers, and the ECEC workforce through use of advisory bodies. Invest resources and capacity to create accessible avenues for policymakers to consult with and involve families, providers, and the ECEC workforce in the policy and decision-making process. Build time into the decision-making process to ensure inclusivity in this including language access for families who do not speak English as a first language. The State must ensure ways for families to not only be invited but included and able to participate by addressing barriers related to expense, scheduling, technology, literacy, etc.

#### **Agency Objectives – what will the state agency achieve?**

A centralized ECEC state agency will fulfill the following objectives to ensure equitable access and support equitable outcomes for all children and families, including English Learners and children with disabilities:

- **Plan cohesively for sustainable ECEC**
  - Unify vision, decision-making, and communication.
  - Unify the definition of quality.

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- Design program models and funding streams to respond to family and community needs and address system gaps and inequities, with attention to how Head Start/Early Head Start fit into the overall system and ensuring inclusive supports for children with disabilities and English Learners.
- Adopt a diversity, equity, and inclusion framework to guide decision-making.
- Meet the regulatory requirements of federal and state funding streams.
- Navigate political and administrative changes.
- Support a statewide system of regional and local collaborations that engage stakeholders (especially parents/guardians) in the planning of ECEC services.
- **Improve access to high quality and ensure equitable outcomes**
  - Ensure sufficient capacity at regional/local level.
  - Use disaggregated data to inform decisions on resource allocation to meet system and community goals.
  - Prioritize resource distribution to reconcile past underinvestment and support equitable access and outcomes.
  - Fund and incentivize high quality ECEC services, including racially/ethnically inclusive opportunities for quality improvement and equitable resource distribution to underserved communities and intentional focus on children with disabilities and English learners.
- **Improve system transparency, accountability, and efficiency**
  - Unify monitoring, data collection, and reporting and monitor equitable access to resources.
    - Institute system accountability team and measures to monitor system outcomes over time
  - Send funding allocations to providers with time to plan.
  - Implement systems to support simplified funding distribution and reduce duplication of effort.
  - In accordance with our Racial Equity review, the agency must:
    - Include an accountability office that prioritizes quantitative and qualitative data, including the creation and maintenance of performance scorecard that disaggregates metrics by race and is accountable to communities through implementation
    - Support the data capacity of providers and communities through:
      - Quality data collection, including race, ethnicity and home language data
      - Community-level capacity to analyze data on service gaps
      - Creating a culture of data-based decision making to support racial equity in services
    - Be accountable to communities through implementation by reporting on metrics

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- **Respond to family need and earn public trust**
  - Unify family engagement and community systems strategies, engaging diverse stakeholders in an inclusive decision-making process.
  - Implement accountability that is focused on family perspectives, data, equitable access to high quality ECEC, and equitable outcomes for young children and families.

If a new state ECEC agency is created, governance will matter deeply to its sustainability. The Commission recommends a Board governance structure, a public-private partnership to support collaboration and coordination across the comprehensive early development field, and centralized advisory bodies to support consultation with and involvement of families, providers, and the ECEC workforce (including an advisory group focused on funding adequacy). Advisory groups should be unified under the Early Learning Council umbrella with targeted charges for each group and a clear structure for communication across advisory groups supported by the agency. The Early Learning Council should be restructured to ensure that racial equity is prioritized and that appropriate stakeholder engagement and parent/guardian voice is adequately represented and part of a robust feedback and accountability structure.

### Planning & Implementation

The Early Childhood Funding Commission brought together diverse, leading voices across the early childhood sector as well as business and legislative leaders to study the fundamental challenges experienced by families, providers, educators, staff, and other stakeholders, and to make bold, foundational recommendations to strengthen and grow ECEC in Illinois. The Commission's recommendations lay out the vision for an effective future system which will take significant time, effort, and commitment to move forward. Additionally, this process unearthed many issues that cannot be covered within the Commission's timeframe that remain critical to effective implementation of the recommendations. Therefore, the Commission offers its recommendations on immediate next steps and priorities for 2021 below.

#### **Immediate Next Steps to move forward**

Beginning upon conclusion of the Commission's work, we recommend the following next steps be taken to establish the structures by which the work moves forward. These are essential to begin planning and execution of priorities:

- **Establish this work as a priority for State leadership.** To begin the planning for initiatives to be undertaken in 2021 and beyond, the State must explicitly make a commitment to continuing the progress made by this Commission. State agency leadership must be empowered to move the work forward, establish decision-making structures, and make available cross-agency resources. Current state agencies should be given the time and

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resources needed to develop a blueprint for the future system and next steps, with definite attention to accountability mechanisms and forums to ensure the work progresses. A designated leader is needed to direct and oversee this cross-agency work. Designating a person in the Governor's Office to lead the implementation across multiple agencies will signal its importance and ensure the work moves forward in a timely fashion.

- **Establish an advisory group to guide the work.** An advisory group, possibly the Early Learning Council, informed by and representative of all areas of the early childhood field and with prioritized representation for parents/guardians and providers, should support and inform agency leadership, guide the next phase of this work, and monitor effective implementation of the Commission's recommendations. The State, in collaboration with this group, should establish and make public a specific plan and timeline for implementation and provide regular progress updates to the public.
- **Ensure authentic stakeholder engagement is paramount from the beginning through clear, established processes.** The State and the advisory group must ensure stakeholder voice is foundational to all decision-making. Intensive, iterative, and inclusive stakeholder engagement with clear feedback loops must be a continual focus. The Commission recommends the State and the advisory group jointly establish clear forums and processes for stakeholder engagement to ensure all stakeholder groups are represented in conversations and recommendation-making and ensure opportunities for engagement are communicated with an intentional focus on reaching priority populations that have been historically underserved. The Commission recommends regular public reports to ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Establish an intentional focus on equity, including racial equity, from the beginning.** Equity must be interwoven into planning and implementation of the Commission's recommendations as shared throughout this report. As part of this, the State should: 1) make an explicit, stated commitment to using a racial equity lens moving forward (including conducting a full Racial Equity Impact Assessment during implementation); 2) plan, execute, and evaluate implementation of the recommendations with a clear way to understand equity of impact based on race, ethnicity, home language, income, children's individual needs, and geography; 3) recognize that systems of oppression and injustice have been built over decades and to dismantle and rebuild an anti-racist ECEC system will require a long-term commitment to working differently and 4) recruit and involve a diverse, representative group of stakeholders most impacted by the recommendations to guide implementation.
- **Fully resource implementation planning efforts.** Finally, implementing a coherent, cohesive funding system and centralized oversight requires a significant, intentional, and well-resourced effort. Adequate funding and state agency staff capacity are required to fulfill the recommendations above, along with intentionality, thoughtful deliberation with those most impacted, dedication to equity in the process, and resources to secure

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external expertise as needed. The State should establish a plan for reporting progress against the recommendations to provide transparency to and communicate with families and providers across Illinois, and ensure resources are made available to achieve that plan.

#### **Leading with Equity**

As the work to make the State's ECEC system better, simpler, and fairer moves forward, the State must commit to planning, executing, and evaluating implementation of the recommendations with a clear eye on equity. There must be an established way to understand how the impact of implementation may vary by race, ethnicity, home language, income, children's individual needs, and geography. Here, we highlight some of the main equity considerations for the Commission's three key recommendations:

- **Ensure Equity in Funding Goals.** Identify which services will be prioritized for resourcing and for whom before funding adequacy is reached so that inequities are not exacerbated, then set benchmarks to monitor implementation over time. Prioritize service expansions based on identified needs, priority populations, and rectifying existing inequities. Determine human capital recruitment and capacity building needs and strategies (e.g., workforce, community systems) and prioritize funds to build capacity in areas that are most underserved. Ensure thorough studies are completed on remaining questions to address on costs of adequate early intervention and early childhood special education services, and that these are included in equity considerations.
- **Ensure Equity in Funding System.** Identify and address how expanded funding distribution could burden or exclude current providers. Involve providers and parents/guardians in the funding mechanism development process including RFPs to ensure it is accessible to all and not unfairly advantaging some. Build in accountability for multi-year contracts, which include racial equity-based criteria for funding eligibility or priority and mandate services based on need (e.g., ensuring bilingual services are funded and available for those who need them).
- **Ensure Equity in the New Governance Structure.** Intentionally and equitably build the capacity of local boards or advisory bodies, including identifying and providing services based on community need. Collaborate with state, regional, and local agencies to address service alignment, and further specify the role that community-level entities, such as community collaborations, will play in accessing and distributing funds and services to explicitly address local needs. Involve community stakeholders directly in decision-making to create the new agency in a way that can prioritize equitable decision-making and policy and create an outreach and support plan for underserved communities throughout the transition to a new agency.

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### **2021 Implementation Priorities**

The Commission's long-term vision will take time – and yet change is needed urgently. Therefore, the Commission strongly urges that the State prioritizes the following initiatives in 2021. These priority initiatives are best achieved under a designated leader within the State, directing and overseeing cross-agency work, in anticipation of the development of regional and community systems and a centralized ECEC state structure.

- **Establish the framework for effective stakeholder engagement.** Catalogue existing advisory councils and consolidate if and where deemed appropriate in partnership with existing councils; ensure diverse representation and adequate representation for all priority populations amongst councils; and clarify the connection between advisory councils and the advisory group guiding this implementation work. To ensure equity of voice and in decision making, and to ensure a racially equitable system, the State should work with a broad set of stakeholders to engage families, providers, educators and other staff, and advocates across the state that are typically not at advisory tables.
- **Update the adequacy cost model with more robust analysis through follow-on studies.** It is critical to have a collective understanding of the true cost of providing high quality ECEC services that meets family needs and respects our providers and workforce as a basis to inform smart policy and investment decisions as we move forward toward our envisioned future. As discussed in Key Recommendation 1, there are several areas of cost modeling and related analyses that the Commission was not able to fully address within its timeline and for which the State must conduct more complete cost modeling in 2021.
  - These include conducting studies on adequate costs of Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education, and Family Friend and Neighbor care services. For each, providers and relevant ECEC workforce members must be deeply engaged in conversations of adequacy.
  - Furthermore, the State should incorporate into the cost model estimated resources to support authentic family and community engagement in planning and implementing services, and culturally and linguistically responsive services and related professional development.
  - The State should prioritize estimations of the cost of local and regional capacity building and infrastructure, state infrastructure necessary to support the other recommendations included in this report, and the cost of building the needed capacity in the early childhood system to meet the Commission's full suite of recommendations.
  - In addition, the State should undertake a study to assess current local funding capacity and to identify options and incentives for longer-term local contributions to adequate funding.
- **Plan the new centralized system of funding and governance.** The work to centralize funding and governance will require significant planning that must begin as soon as possible. ISBE, DHS, and DCFS have been discussing this work for several months to

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support the Commission's deliberations. This Commission recommends the following actions:

- Formalize a study of organizational capacities and functions across ISBE, DHS, DCFS in comparison to needed capacities for the centralized agency. It should also define the organizational chart of new centralized structure and define community and regional roles in the structure. Finally, a search should be initiated for the future ECEC state leader.
- Create a Blueprint for how to carry out centralization over the next several years, including identifying any aspects of the multi-year strategies that will require legislation. The plan should identify the appropriate timeline and phase-in approach for all aspects of the envisioned future system (including but not limited to centralization of funding, policy, accountability, infrastructure, and communications).
- Complete a formal study to inform the development of a potential funding formula that would adequately provide for the provision of high-quality, equitable services in various settings.
- Complete studies on funding mechanisms for Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention that can promote the provision of services to families and children in a way that meets their needs. The Commission held deep discussions about the challenges and potential opportunities for improvement in both systems. To move forward, studies should commence on both systems with deep engagement with providers, families, educators and clinicians, research on other states' practices, and thorough review of federal policies and restrictions. Ultimately, follow-on studies will need to validate challenges and opportunities, determine how services should be delivered to meet objectives, determine ability to best support recommended service delivery with all funding sources at hand, and determine how both systems can best fit within the centralized system of funding and governance.
  - While this further study is underway, the Commission believes Early Childhood Special Education should remain in EBF. Meanwhile, the Commission recommends that the cost factors associated with ECSE, notably the SPED teachers cost factor, be reviewed by the EBF Professional Review Panel to address identified concerns about ratios within the calculation and understand ramifications on EBF based on adjustments that may be needed.
- Complete a study on funding mechanisms and structures of a centralized governance system that can best support English Learners and their families. The Commission did not grapple with these issues specifically in their deliberations, and this should be a priority in implementation planning. Specifically, this study must consider Early Childhood English Learners within EBF along with federal Title I, II, III and IV. Future consideration should also be given to program evaluation

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and how English Learner ECEC services will align with K-12 English Learners services.

- **Map adequacy and associated plans for rate increases, prioritizing where to invest incremental funding.** While there have been several recent analyses of the distribution of “slots” of early childhood services over the past few years, the State does not have a clear map of the total sum of public resources that are being expended on early childhood services at specific levels of geography (such as a school district boundary area), or of how that compares to the need that has been identified through the Commission’s cost model. Mapping can inform near-term expansion of early childhood education and care and home visiting services and set the groundwork for rate increases and funding formula development.
- **Pilot centralized funding formula components.** The move to a more contract-centered funding system, particularly for child care services, is likely to have many unforeseen challenges and impacts. The agencies should work together to pilot contracts with a small number of providers to discover and work through these issues.
  - ExceleRate Illinois pilot—supporting quality improvement with up-front funding to support needed staffing pattern and compensation levels
  - Early Childhood Block Grant and Child Care Assistance Program pilot—combining funding sources into single, stable grant, designed to complement Head Start/Early Head Start funding where applicable
  - Family Child Care network or expansion—supporting quality in home-based settings
- **Plan and build out Regional and Community Systems.** The Commission has noted that building out regional- and community-level systems for early childhood planning and coordination is critical for achieving the goal of ensuring equitable access to services across the state. The state should build upon the many years of work that has been done in this area to establish regional and local systems with an adequately resourced “backbone organization” to support their work. These systems must include formal structures for engaging families and ensuring their voice is prioritized in decision-making around the development and improvement of ECEC services. Input from Regional and Community Systems will inform the development of the new agency and how it can best support their work.
  - Hire a policy leader for regional and community systems to lead intensive planning for implementation, including but not limited to establishing processes for and leading efforts to obtain broad stakeholder engagement, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, communications planning, and researching and designing the legal structure needed.
- **Develop goals and business requirements for Data Systems supportive of Commission recommendations.** Current data systems are not coordinated or robust enough to provide the data needed to appropriately plan. With the move toward a centralized

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system of funding and governance, there is a unique opportunity to rethink and refine data systems to support the state's vision for ECEC. In particular, data available today is insufficient to understand equity across factors including race, ethnicity, culture, home language, income, children's individual needs, and geography, making intentional planning for equity incredibly challenging. The state must develop the blueprint for future ECEC data systems, continuing the work already underway as part of the Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five and the Illinois Longitudinal Data System 2.0 project.

- **Invest in building the state's diverse ECEC workforce.** The Commission acknowledges the many challenges facing the ECEC workforce, including a concerning downturn in the number of individuals completing degrees in early childhood over the past several years. Because a well-qualified workforce is so foundational to the success of the ECEC system, it is imperative that the State continues and expands its investment in strategies to support workforce development, including the scholarships, degree cohort programs, "grow your own", and educator debt relief initiatives that are currently in place.

### Closing Remarks

The Commission sincerely thanks Governor J.B. Pritzker for his ongoing support and commitment to the families and youngest learners of our state, and for his leadership in the creation of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education & Care Funding. The administration's demonstrated commitment and continued investment in and prioritization of ECEC, in partnership with the dedication of the ECEC community, positions us well to meet the goal of becoming the best state in the country for families to raise young children. When Governor Pritzker gave us the mandate to think bold, we embraced it fully. **Our goal is straightforward: all children regardless of race, wealth or background should be ready to start school on day one.** We believe that the recommendations presented in this report can set our State on the path to achieve this goal. With an articulated funding goal, a long-term, unified, planning and policy infrastructure, and a coherent funding and accountability system, Illinois will be positioned to lead in ECEC equity and quality. We believe this is the system that our providers, our children and their families, our ECEC workforce, and our State deserve. **The time for this bold change is now.**

## Appendices

1. Commission Co-Chairs & Members
2. Commission Process
3. Links to contributing reports (Cost Model Report and Racial Equity Analysis Report)

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### Appendix 1: Commission Co-Chairs and Members

#### COMMISSION CO-CHAIRS

**Jesse Ruiz** was named Deputy Governor for Education in January 2019. Ruiz came to the Governor's Office after over 20 years as a corporate lawyer at the firm Drinker, Biddle, and Reath, where he focused on mergers and acquisitions. Throughout his law career, Ruiz also served in many public service roles including Chair of the Illinois State Board of Education, President of the Chicago Park District, and interim CEO of Chicago Public Schools. Ruiz is also the current President of the Chicago Bar Association. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and his JD from the University of Chicago Law School.

**Andy Manar** was named Senior Advisor to the Governor in January 2021. Manar joined the administration after having dedicated eight years to representing the 48<sup>th</sup> Senate district, which encompasses parts of Sangamon, Christian, Macoupin, Madison, Macon, and Montgomery counties. He was a driving force behind the passage of the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding Formula (EBF). Prior to his tenure in the General Assembly, Manar served as Mayor of Bunker Hill and Chairman of the Macoupin County Board. He received his Bachelor of History from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, where he also received his teaching license.

**Barbara Flynn Currie** holds the record for the longest serving woman in the Illinois General Assembly, with 40 years of experience, including over 20 years as Majority Leader. She also helped steer the state's EBF efforts and is known for her tireless advocacy on many progressive issues in Illinois. She received her bachelor's degree and Master of Political Science at the University of Chicago.

**George Davis** began working for the City of Rockford's Head Start program in 1993, serving in various leadership capacities including as the city's Executive Director of Human Services from 2003-2019 when he retired. He is a former member of the Illinois Early Learning Council's (ELC) Executive Committee and the co-chair of the ELC's Access Committee and a former Board member and Chair of the Illinois Head Start Association. He is the current Chair of the Early Learning Council of the Rockford Area. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Illinois Wesleyan University.

#### COMMISSION MEMBERS

**Aarón Ortíz** is a full-time legislator, elected to serve Illinois' 1st House district in 2019. He is Majority Whip and House Chair for the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus. Before becoming a legislator, Ortíz worked as an educator and college counselor at Chicago Public Schools and was a member of the Chicago Teachers Union. He has also served on the Local School Council for the Back of the Yards High School. Ortíz earned his B.A. in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A lifelong resident of the Gage Park neighborhood in Chicago, Ortíz is an alumnus of Florence Nightingale Elementary and Brother Rice High School.

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**Bela Moté** is the CEO of the Carole Robertson Center for Learning. She has over 15 years of experience working in the field of early childcare service provision and policy making in Illinois, having previously worked at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. She earned her Master's in Education from the Erikson Institute.

**Carmen I. Ayala** is the first woman and first person of color to serve in a permanent capacity as the State Superintendent of Education. Prior to her appointment, Ayala worked as an educator and administrator in Chicago, Aurora, Plainfield, and Carpentersville before leading the Berwyn North School District. She has 38 years of experience in education. She received her Ph.D. from Loyola University, her MBA from Dominican University, and her undergraduate degree from Mundelein College.

**Cathy Mannen** is an Illinois Federation of Teachers Professional Issues Director, a role she has held since transitioning from her previous position as President of the Champaign Federation of Teachers in 2016. Mannen has worked in various roles as an educator since 1998 working mainly with elementary school students. She received her Bachelor of Music from Millikin University, a Master of Science in Education from Eastern Illinois University, and her Master of Education with a General Administrative Endorsement from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign.

**Craig Esko** is Senior Vice President of Community Relations at PNC Bank, where he oversees community engagement, philanthropy, and sponsorship civic initiatives. Prior to joining PNC in 2008, Esko also worked at Discover, LaSalle Bank, and National City Bank. He serves on the boards of Metropolitan Family Services and the Illinois Holocaust Museum. Mr. Esko received his Bachelor of Science in marketing from Northern Illinois University.

**Christina Hachikian** is a Clinical Associate Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. She specializes in social innovation and nonprofit management. She was the founding executive director of the Rustandy Center for Social Sector Innovation, Chicago Booth's social impact hub, which she led until 2020. She has served on various boards related to early childhood workforce and governance, including the Chicago Early Childhood Workforce Committee convened by Mayor Emmanuel in 2018. Prior to founding Rustandy, Hachikian served as the Vice President and Head of Investor Relations and Corporate Development at Cole Taylor Bank, and before that spent almost a decade at ShoreBank in various strategy roles. She holds an MBA from Chicago Booth and an AB from The College at the University of Chicago. Hachikian was named to Crain's 40 under 40 list in 2019.

**Christopher Belt** represents the 57<sup>th</sup> Senate District, located in the Southwestern region of Illinois in St. Clair and Madison counties, where he has spent his entire life. Belt served as a corrections officer for St. Clair County for 18 years. Throughout this time Belt dedicated his energies towards creating positive role models for youth in his community, founding the Difference Makers Professional Organization in 2003 and publishing a children's book called "The Adventures of Nate the Gnat" about responsible decision making. Belt also served as President of the Cahokia Unit District 187 school board. He earned his Bachelor of History from Illinois State University, a

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Master of Public Administration from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, and a Master of Professional Counseling from Lindenwood-Belleville.

**Donald DeWitte** was the mayor of St. Charles for eight years before being elected to serve the 33<sup>rd</sup> Senate district in 2018. He has also served on the Regional Transit Authority as a representative for Kane County. DeWitte currently sits on the Senate Education Committee. He attended Elgin Community College and the University of Illinois Springfield.

**Elliot Regenstein** is a partner at Foresight Law + Policy and a member of the Illinois Early Learning Council. He is the chair of the Illinois Longitudinal Data System Governing Board and a co-chair of the ELC's Data, Research, and Evaluation Subcommittee. He has been involved with legal and policy issues related to Illinois public education since 2004, when he served as the Director of Education Reform in the Governor's office (through 2006). Regenstein has published numerous articles on education policy and data usage. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University and his JD from the University of Michigan.

**Evelyn Osorio** is a Chicago native and a Child Care Field Coordinator for SEIU Healthcare. She has a dedicated track record of issue advocacy and volunteer work, especially regarding the rights of immigrants and non-native English speakers. She has worked with SEIU since 2013 and was formerly involved with the Immigrant Youth Justice League and Centro Autonomo. Osorio holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Grace Hou** became the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services in 2019. She previously served as Assistant Secretary at DHS before becoming President of the Woods Fund, a Chicago non-profit dedicated to alleviating structural injustices. She earned her Bachelor of Science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and her Master of Public Administration from the University of Illinois Springfield.

**Jodi Scott** is the Superintendent of Regional Office of Education #33 encompassing Mercer, Knox, Warren, and Henderson counties, a role she assumed in 2007 after having joined the office in 2000 as a consultant for early childhood education. Scott was also a member of the Illinois School Funding Reform Commission, the entity responsible for the EBF. She received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and her Master's in early childhood from Western Illinois University.

**Kristin Bernhard** is the Senior Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Start Early (formerly the Ounce of Prevention Fund), where she leads teams focused on early childhood governance and funding in Illinois and nationwide. Bernhard oversaw Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning and served on the policy teams of two Georgia governors. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Georgia and her JD from the Georgia State University.

**Lori Longueville** is the director of John A. Logan College Child Care Resource & Referral, where she oversees the organization's goal of improving accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care and early education in the southern fifteen counties in Illinois. She also serves as the Chairperson for the Southern Illinois Coalition for Children and Families. Prior to these roles, Ms.

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Longueville has worked as a public school teacher and child care center director. At a national level, she has served as the Secretary for the Governing Board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Ms. Longueville has been involved in early childhood advocacy for over 35 years and has participated in numerous committees, and workgroups for the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Early Learning Council, IDHS and DCFS. Ms. Longueville holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Illinois Wesleyan University.

**Nydia I. Burgo** is an early childhood educator in North Shore School District 112 and a member of the Illinois Education Association. Nydia has been an educator for 35 years, of which 29 have been dedicated to early childhood education. She holds certificates in Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Foreign Languages, K-9 Education, and Educational Leadership. She acquired a Bachelor in Elementary Education K-9, a Master's Degree in Special Education and a second Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Northeastern Illinois University. She speaks and writes both English and Spanish fluently. In 2006, she participated in the State of Illinois Early Childhood Committee to create benchmarks, definitions and progress continuum for 3 and 4-year-olds.

**Patricia Chamberlain** is the president of Chamberlain Educational Consulting Inc., an independent education consultancy. Her work focuses on supporting quality improvement for dual language learners and their families in the early childhood system. Prior to this, Ms. Chamberlain worked as an ESL/Bilingual teacher, a professional development specialist, a public school principal, a Director of Early Learners in U46 and instructor at the Erikson Institute. She has been involved in the Illinois State Board of Education as a Bilingual Advisory Committee member. Ms. Chamberlain holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois and a Master of Science degree from Northern Illinois University.

**Phyllis Glink** is the Executive Director of the Irving Harris Foundation. In her work with the Foundation she has led, developed and implemented its grantmaking and field leadership work in the areas of early childhood development and child and family welfare, reproductive health and justice, Jewish values, and social justice. Prior to joining the Irving Harris Foundation, Ms. Glink worked for the Chicago Community Trust focusing on grant making and program development in the areas of education and women and girls' issues. Ms. Glink is currently the co-chair of the Early Learning Council and has served on the Health transition team for the Rauner administration, the Pritzker Education Transition team, and the Lightfoot Education transition team. Ms. Glink holds a Bachelor of Art degree from the University of Michigan and a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Chicago.

**Rey Gonzalez** is the President and CEO of El Valor, stepping into the role in 2013 after serving as the Board Chair for over 32 years. At El Valor, Mr. Gonzalez oversees the nonprofit's goal of supporting and enriching the lives of urban families through a variety of ways including early childhood education. Prior to his role as El Valor's President and CEO, Mr. Gonzalez served in multiple roles at various corporations, including the Vice President for Legislative and Community Affairs at ComEd and prior to that the Vice President of Corporate Diversity for Exelon Corporation. Before joining Exelon in 2002, Rey also served as Vice President of Diversity

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for the McDonald's Corporation. Rey's early career includes his passion for service and social justice in his roles at both the National Council of La Raza and the Chicago Urban League. Rey received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Joseph's College and a Master's of Science from Northern Illinois University.

**Robin Steans** is President of Advance Illinois, an independent policy and advocacy organization with the goal helping build a healthy public education system that enables all students to achieve success in college, career and civic life. She is also Board Chair of the Steans Family Foundation, where she helps guide education and community development grant making in the North Lawndale community. Ms. Steans also served as a public school teacher early in her career. She served as a Trustee of the University of Chicago Medical Center. Ms. Steans received her undergraduate degree from Brown University, her Master of Education degree from Stanford University and her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Chicago.

**Rochelle Golliday** is the Executive Director of Cuddle Care, a network of four childcare centers in Chicago and Riverdale, IL. In addition to that, she is a Trainer for Gateways to Opportunity, a statewide professional development support system designed to provide guidance, encouragement, and recognition to individuals and programs serving children, youth, and families. Prior to her current work, Ms. Golliday has worked professor and instructor at both Chicago State University and South Suburban College. Ms. Golliday received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Roosevelt University and her Master of Adult Education and Master of Arts in Teaching degrees, both from National Louis University.

**Shauna Ejeh** is the Senior Vice President for Programs at Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) where she oversees all of IAFC's program service department and works to ensure quality care and delivery of early childhood education and care services. Ms. Ejeh previously worked at Baby Talk Early Head Start and the Illinois head start State collaboration Office where she helped ensure and improve delivery of Head Start services to families. Additionally, Ms. Ejeh is currently a member of the Early Learning Council. Ms. Ejeh received both her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts from American University.

**Thomas Bennett** is an Assistant Minority Leader and Illinois State Representative of the 106th legislative district. He worked as a high school science teacher at Melvin Sibley and IT manager/developer/trainer at State Farm Insurance. Rep. Bennett is chairman of the Parkland College Board of Trustees and board member for 19 years. He earned a BS in Education, BS in Applied Computer Science, MBA and a Doctorate of Business Administration.

**Trish Rooney** is the Vice President of Programs for Fox Valley United Way and also serves as Director of SPARK, an early childhood community collaboration in Aurora. She previously spent 16 years working to improve the quality of childcare programs in DuPage and Kane counties with the local Childcare Resource and Referral system. Rooney is a member of the Illinois Early Learning Council and is co-chair of the Community Systems Development subcommittee. She also serves on several public and non-profit boards in Aurora dedicated to improving education and early care.

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**Will Davis** has represented Chicago's south suburbs since 2003. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the House Elementary and Secondary Appropriations Committee and is a Commissioner on the state's Budgeting for Results Commission. Davis was the chief House sponsor of SB1947, the bill created the Evidence-Based Funding model for school funding reform, and was a founding member of the Better Funding for Better Schools Coalition. Davis received his Bachelor of Arts from Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Master of Public Administration from Governors State University.

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# Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education & Care Funding

## Commission Report: Findings and Recommendations

### Appendix 2: Commission Proceedings

## Introduction & Overview of Proceedings

The Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education & Care Funding (“Early Childhood Funding Commission” or “Commission”) formally launched on December 16, 2019 with Governor Pritzker’s charge to “*study and make recommendations to establish funding goals and funding mechanisms to provide equitable access to high-quality early childhood education and care services for all children birth to age five and advise the Governor in planning and implementing these recommendations*”. In pursuit of this charge, the Commission included four working groups to address key components of the charge:

- Funding Adequacy: determine the cost of providing high quality ECEC services and how to fund over time
- Management & Oversight: recommend improved ECEC management structures and responsibilities, in a
- Funding Mechanisms: recommend improved funding mechanisms to move funding from various sources to recipient
- Inclusion: Inform the work of other Working Groups and the full Commission as it relates to children receiving special education and early intervention services

As the Commission advanced in its work, two additional Working Groups were stood up:

- Racial Equity: review the Commission’s findings and preliminary recommendations from a racial equity lens
- Technical: review the Commission’s preliminary recommendations from a technical feasibility lens

The Commission met once per month from December 2019 through March 2021, with the exception of April 2020 at the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic. Working Groups typically met once per month between Commission meetings. Occasionally, Working Group subcommittee meetings were held.

In addition to standing Commission and Working Group meetings, the Commission and/or individual Commissioners and/or their organizations held stakeholder engagement forums throughout the process. Several of the key opportunities are documented at the end of this document.

## Proceedings

### Full Commission Meeting #1 – December 16, 2019

Meetings Goals:

1. Grounding the Commission in its charge and scope, its importance and urgency for Illinois’ children and families, and the great work and progress to date that sets the stage for the work ahead, and

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2. Setting priorities for the Commission's future work.

Meeting Summary: Gov. Pritzker set a goal for Illinois to become the best state for families with young children. The Governor's Office and the Commission recognized the challenges the ECEC system faces in equitable access, adequate funding, and system stability, requiring innovation in governance and systemic change.

Presenters: Governor JB Pritzker

Materials: Commission Overview and Discussion, Commission Primer

### Full Commission Meeting #2 – January 14, 2020

Meeting Goals:

1. Align on Guiding Principles for our work
2. Determine approach to the work ahead
3. Ground ourselves in related work done to date
4. Set next steps

Meeting Summary: Commissioners reflected on the need to think boldly to create a stable, sustainable, and streamlined ECEC system that promotes equity and recognizes the importance of mixed delivery and family choice. Four working groups were established, and each was given a charge by the Commissioners. Working groups were to be launched following this meeting.

Materials: Stakeholder Engagement Frame

### Working Groups Meetings #1 – January 30 - February 5, 2020

#### Funding Adequacy Working Group Meeting – February 5, 2020

1. Validate the work plan to accomplish our Working Group Charge
2. Revisit key data about our state's current ECEC services and outcomes
3. Agree upon approach to get to "the number"
4. Discuss the State's cost modeling done to date
5. Agree upon a decision framework for primary drivers of funding adequacy
6. Identify next steps

Materials: Illinois ECEC Cost Model Report December 2019

#### Funding Mechanism Working Group Meeting – February 4, 2020

1. Validate the work plan to accomplish our Working Group Charge
2. Review today's mechanisms and discuss what choices has the State made and why?
3. Understand the current structure relative to the Commission's guiding principle
4. Identify next steps

Materials: Illinois ECE Funding Strategy, NIEER 2016 Funding Landscape for Preschool with a Highly Qualified Workforce

### Management & Oversight Working Group Meeting – January 30, 2020

1. Discuss what management & oversight means: which activities?
2. Validate the work plan to accomplish our Working Group Charge

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3. Understand the current management & oversight structures and what choices has Illinois made and why?
5. Understand the current structure relative to the Commission's guiding principles
6. Identify next steps

Materials: Analysis of Proposed Governance Structures for Early Childhood Programs in Illinois 2018, Illinois PDG Governance Final Recommendations Report

#### **Inclusion Working Group Meeting – February 4, 2020**

1. Validate the work plan to accomplish our Working Group Charge
2. Level-set on the current state: population, services provided, and funding streams, and oversight structures relevant to this Working Group
3. Introduce cost modeling work to date, with a focus on how it accounts for Special Education and Early Intervention
4. Share a decision framework for making recommendations
5. Identify next steps

Materials: Analysis of Proposed Governance Structures for Early Childhood Programs in Illinois 2018, Illinois PDG Governance Final Recommendations Report

#### **Full Commission Meeting #3 – February 11, 2020**

Meeting Goals:

1. Understand the progress and plans of each Commission Working Group
2. Develop a stakeholder engagement plan
3. Set next steps

Meeting Summary: It was noted that current ECEC funding is not currently in line with the Commission's charge. The Commission acknowledged that stakeholder engagement is a priority and necessity of its work and invited the public to weigh in on its engagement strategies.

#### **Working Groups Meetings – February 28 - March 4, 2020**

##### **Funding Adequacy Working Group Meeting – March 2, 2020**

1. Come to a common understanding of “adequacy”
2. Validate or refine the list of programs/services included in cost model
3. Validate or refine the major drivers of cost of high-quality ECEC by program/service

Materials: CSCCE 2019 Breaking the Silence on Early Child Care and Education Costs, CSCCE 2020 Who's Paying Now?, Erikson 2019 Illinois Risk and Reach Report, Illinois Cost Model for Early Childhood Education and Care Services, ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant Funding by Year Work Group Data Request, NASEM 2018 Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education (slides), NIEER 2020 Ensuring Adequate Resources for Expanding High Quality, NYC Comptroller 2019 NYC Under 3

##### **Funding Mechanism Working Group Meeting – March 2, 2020**

1. Review research available to inform recommendations, including other states
2. Develop future system requirements

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Materials: BCG 2019 Illinois ECE Funding Strategy, ECS 2018 How States Fund Pre-K: A Primer for Policymakers, ELC 2019 Ensuring Equitable Access to Funding for All Birth to Five Classroom-Based Early Childhood Programs, IAFC 2018 Is ISBE Pre-K Funding Distributed Equitably?, NIEER 2016 Funding Landscape for Preschool with a Highly Qualified Workforce, NIEER 2020 Ensuring Adequate Resources for Expanding High Quality

#### **Management & Oversight Working Group Meeting – February 28, 2020**

1. Review research available to inform recommendations, including other states
2. Develop future system requirements

Materials: AIR 2019 Illinois PDG B-5 ECCE Governance Strategic Planning Facilitation, BCG 2019 Illinois ECE Funding Strategy, Build 2013 A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System, Build 2016 Background Reports on Governance Models, Nourse 2017 State Governance Changes Analysis, Regenstein 2020 Early Childhood Governance Decision Guide, Zumwalt and Saterfield 2018 Analysis of Proposed Governance Structures for Early Childhood Programs in Illinois

#### **Inclusion Working Group Meeting – March 4, 2020**

As it pertains to Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention Services:

1. Identify necessary changes to cost model and approach to calculating adequacy
2. Identify pros and cons of current funding mechanisms that we have control over
3. Align on a process for developing M&O recommendations for inclusion

Materials: Early Intervention Funding Flow Chart, IICEI 2015 Service Delivery Approaches Workgroup Report, Illinois Cost Model for Early Childhood Education and Care Services

#### **Full Commission Meeting #4 – Cancelled due to onset of the COVID-19 pandemic**

#### **Full Commission Meeting #5 – April 14, 2020**

Meeting Goals:

1. Discuss Illinois' early childhood system response to COVID-19 and its connection to the Commission's work
2. Clarifying the Commission's charge: Review survey results on defining "equitable access"
3. Chart our path forward

Meeting Summary: The Commission reviewed the Governor's Office and agency responses to the pandemic and the ways in which Illinois supports providers as essential workers, as well as how the Commission's charge reflects the needs of a strained ECEC system.

Materials: COVID-19: Illinois' Early Childhood Care and Education Response

#### **Working Groups Meetings #3 – April 27, 2020 – May 4, 2020**

##### **Funding Adequacy Working Group Meeting – April 27, 2020**

1. Discuss preliminary thinking on "equitable access" and impact on the work of this Working Group
2. Fully understand our collective needs to feel comfortable with an eventual adequacy number and have a clear plan to get there

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3. Hear from Working Group Subgroup on their findings and recommendations for the cost model
4. Determine next steps toward a cost of adequacy

#### **Funding Mechanism Working Group Meeting – April 27, 2020**

1. Synthesize working group member perspectives on the definition of “equitable access” in the Commission’s charge
2. Re-ground in the lessons learned from state and provider COVID-19 matters of relevance to ECEC Funding Mechanisms
3. Re-ground in where we were as a working group before COVID-19
4. Begin to construct options for a system of ECEC funding mechanisms

Materials: Funding Mechanisms and Funding Streams Alignment, Mechanism Pros and Cons

#### **Management & Oversight Working Group Meeting – May 4, 2020**

1. Synthesize working group member perspectives on the definition of equitable access in the Commission's charge
2. Re-ground in the lessons learned from state and provider COVID-19 matters of relevance to ECEC Management & Oversight
3. Re-ground in where we were as a working group before COVID-19
4. Synthesize working group member perspectives on state level “coordination” or “centralization” of ECEC Management & Oversight

#### **Inclusion Working Group – April 27, 2020**

1. Discuss preliminary thinking on “equitable access” shared in virtual Commission Meeting
2. Understand how this preliminary thinking impacts the work of this Working Group
3. Unpack M&O and Mechanisms questions and develop a baseline for making recommendations
4. Share the path forward to get to adequacy recommendations
5. Determine next steps

#### **Full Commission Meeting #6 – May 11, 2020**

Meeting Goals:

1. Gain an understanding of the direction each Commission working group is headed
2. Further refine and conceptualize the definition of “equitable access” in the Commission’s charge
3. Get a clearer picture of the Commission’s final deliverable scope and timeline to get to recommendations

Meeting Summary: The Management & Oversight Working Group moved toward a recommendation of centralizing ECEC services within one agency. Funding Mechanisms recommended blending funding upstream, Adequacy worked toward validating cost model assumptions and a realistic child count, and Inclusion emphasized creating a smooth transition for families as the move between services.

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### Working Groups Meetings #4 – June 1, 2020 – June 10, 2020

#### Funding Adequacy Working Group – June 1, 2020

1. Review updates to Validation Plan, including Expert Panel feedback
2. Review feedback from full Commission on who is eligible for what services
3. Child Count: Align cost model input to Commission guidance

#### Funding Mechanism Working Group – June 10, 2020

1. Recap our progress and our work thus far
2. Consider drafted examples of a future system of funding mechanisms
3. Develop initial recommendation package and implementation considerations

#### Management & Oversight Working Group – June 8, 2020

1. Recap on the progress we have made thus far, including last month's discussion on coordination vs. centralization
2. Consider how the placement of M&O capacities at state level vs. region/local level will meet our objectives

Materials: M&O Capacities Prototype (draft), Regional vs. State Capacities

#### Inclusion Working Group – June 8, 2020

1. Understand where M&O and Mechanisms Working Groups are heading and implications for our thinking
2. Understand our current state in enough detail to envision a better future M&O and Mechanism system
3. Establish recommendations for mechanism improvements to inform Mechanisms Working Group
4. Move forward in our plan to calculate adequacy for EI and ECSE

Materials: Early Intervention Funding Flow Chart, IICEI 2015 Service Delivery Approaches Workgroup Report, ECSE and EI Funding Flexibilities and Constraints

### Full Commission Meeting #7 – June 16, 2020

Meeting Goals:

1. Discuss our approach toward ensuring racial equity in the Commission's process and ultimate recommendations
2. Discuss initial conclusions from the Management & Oversight and Funding Mechanisms Working Groups

Meeting Summary: The Commission discussed its commitment to effect meaningful change and formed a Racial Equity Working Group as part of its equity work. The Commission assessed the scope of its overall work as a strategic blueprint and catalyst for legislation, teasing out which questions should be left for implementation.

Presenters: Phyllis Glink, Commissioner and Early Learning Council member

Materials: Early Childhood Funding Commission Racial Equity Plan (draft)

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### Working Groups Meetings #5 – June 29, 2020 – June 30, 2020

#### Funding Adequacy Working Group – June 30, 2020

1. Review progress to date
2. Share synthesis of all validation plan feedback received and implications on cost model
3. Discuss cost model alignment with guiding principles
4. Discuss July full Commission update
5. Preview remaining questions to answer

#### Funding Mechanism Working Group – June 29, 2020

1. Recap on progress we have made thus far and the recent Commission meeting
2. Go another layer deeper with our recommendations for a future system of funding mechanisms
3. Identify interdependencies to discuss with Management & Oversight

#### Management & Oversight Working Group – June 29, 2020

1. Recap on progress we have made thus far and the recent Commission meeting
2. Determine pros/cons of creation of a new state agency vs. consolidation into an existing state agency

Materials: Build 2013 A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System, Nourse 2017 State Government Changes Analysis, Regenstein 2020 Early Childhood Governance Decision Guide, Regenstein 2020 Early Childhood Governance Getting There from Here, Zumwalt and Saterfield 2018 Analysis of Proposed Governance Structures for Early Childhood Programs in Illinois, Management & Oversight Working Group Pros and Cons

#### Inclusion Working Group – June 30, 2020

1. Align on Mechanism direction to put forward in the July Commission meeting
2. Evaluate M&O options and come to initial conclusions for centralization vs. coordination

Materials: EI and ECSE Funding Mechanism Options

### Full Commission Meeting #8 – July 14, 2020

#### Meeting Goals:

1. Understand initial conclusions from the Funding Adequacy Working Group and identify further analysis needed to move toward consensus on the conclusions
2. Understand initial conclusions from the Inclusion Working Group on Funding Mechanisms and M&O and identify additional information needed

Meeting Summary: Stakeholders described their experiences from different perspectives in the ECEC system: center and home-based care, and agency oversight. The Funding Adequacy Working Group shared its cost estimate for funding the Commission's recommendations, explaining how direct investment in the ECEC system eliminates existing "hidden costs," such as having underpaid providers who must rely on public assistance programs. The Inclusion Working Group emphasized the need for children to be served in the least restrictive environment.

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Presenters: Maricela Garcia, CEO of Gads Hill Center; Terry Jay, Home Child Care Provider; Linda Saterfield, Interim Associate Director of the IDHS Office of Early Childhood

Materials: Ounce of Prevention Recommendations to Strengthen and Expand the Illinois Evidence-Based Home Visiting System

### Working Groups Meetings #6 – July 27, 2020 – August 4, 2020

#### Funding Adequacy Working Group – July 30, 2020

1. Recap Commission meeting and path forward
2. Home visiting adequacy update
3. Form goals for periodic re-evaluation of funding adequacy
4. Explore how Commission should determine local ability to contribute

Materials: Home Visiting Cost Model Presentation

#### Funding Mechanism and Management & Oversight Working Groups – July 27, 2020

1. Review both working groups' progress so far
2. Discuss an example new system that would take currently defined programs and funding sources into a new, coordinated system of funding distributions
3. Understand implications for the state agency decision
4. Preview the next set of decisions that need to be made

Materials: Sample Recommendations for Management Oversight and Funding Mechanisms, M&O Capacities and Objectives

#### Inclusion Working Group – August 4, 2020

1. Refine our mechanism recommendations to bring to the Funding Mechanisms Working Group meeting in August
2. Further our thinking on where EI and ECSE should live in the future M&O system to bring our recommendations to the M&O Working Group in August

### Full Commission Meeting #9 – August 18, 2020

Meeting Goals:

1. Share perspectives on the direction of recommendations toward a possible centralized state agency structure and funding system
2. Gain more perspective from stakeholders
3. Commit to a Commission timeline and plan between now and January

Meeting Summary: Stakeholders shared their perspectives on the importance of home visiting, adequate compensation for and equitable access to Early Intervention services, and strategies to deliver prenatal to three services. The Commission discussed hidden impacts and missing perspectives in their agreed-upon recommendations.

Presenters: Mary Reynolds, VP of Children's Services, Casa Central; Eunique Drinkard, Inclusion Consultant, Erikson Institute; Simone Santiago, PN3 Director at the Ounce of Prevention

Materials: Illinois Prenatal to Three Policy Agenda & Coalition

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### Working Groups Meetings #7 – August 27, 2020 – September 3, 2020

#### Funding Adequacy Working Group – September 2, 2020

1. Determine recommendations we are best positioned to put forward for periodic re-evaluation of adequacy
2. Solidify local funding initial recommendations for Commission discussion
3. Understand the roadmap to get to a completed funding adequacy number

#### Funding Mechanism Working Group – August 31, 2020

1. Recap the progress we have made thus far
2. Finalize our working group's recommendations with consideration to most recent meetings of the Commission and Management & Oversight Working Group
3. Identify priorities for the Technical Working Group

#### Management & Oversight Working Group – August 27, 2020

1. Recap on the progress we have made thus far and feedback from the most recent Commission meeting
2. Assess state agency options
3. Identify priorities for the Technical Working Group

Materials: Management & Oversight Agency Analysis, Management & Oversight Cost-Benefit Analysis, Management & Oversight Objectives

#### Inclusion Working Group – September 3, 2020

1. Align on recommendations for Mechanisms, including recommendations for further exploration
2. Determine where EI and ECSE should live in the future M&O system given M&O direction

### Full Commission Meeting #10 – September 15, 2020

#### Meeting Goals:

1. Take account of draft recommendations for the centralized system of funding and governance
2. Determine what must still be addressed to fulfill the Commission's charge
3. Determine path forward to resolve remaining questions

Meeting Summary: Stakeholders discussed community-level ECEC infrastructure such as community collaborations. The Commission then reviewed the survey findings, which were also reflected in discussions by focus groups organized by the advocacy group, the Early Childhood Funding Coalition.

Presenters: Jeanine Woltman, Coordinator, Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative; Brenda Crisp, Executive Director, Uni-Pres Kindercottage in East St. Louis

Materials: Commission Web Survey Findings Summary and Analysis

### Working Groups Meetings #8 – September 30, 2020 – October 1, 2020

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#### Funding Adequacy Working Group – October 1, 2020

1. Share progress and updates remaining items for cost model updates (EI, ECSE, Home Visiting, Dual Language Learners, Infrastructure)
2. Share where we landed for recommendations for the re-evaluation process and local contributions

Materials: ECSE Costing Data Analysis, EI Cost Estimate, Sylvia Cotton Center Memo on Racial Equity in Child Care: Supporting Families Who Use Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

#### Funding Mechanism and Management & Oversight Working Groups – October 1, 2020

1. Take account of draft recommendations for the centralized system of funding and governance and feedback from the Commission meeting
2. Determine specific community and regional roles that are required to meet our objectives
3. Determine input and oversight needs for a new ECEC state agency

Materials: The Importance of Community Collaborations, Sylvia Cotton Center Memo on Racial Equity in Child Care: Supporting Families Who Use Family, Friend and Neighbor Care

#### Inclusion Working Group – September 30, 2020

1. Align on recommendations we are best positioned to put forward at this time
2. Understand next steps to refine and solidify recommendations between now and year-end

#### Full Commission Meeting #11 – October 13, 2020

Meeting Goals:

1. Review draft recommendations for funding adequacy and inclusion
2. Hear assessment of the Commission's draft recommendations from a national panel of experts
3. Recap the work that lies ahead

Meeting Summary: The Adequacy Working Group set forth guardrails for funding policies, updating recommendations over time, an advisory body, and research into local funding. The Inclusion Working Group recommended that Early Childhood Special Education remain in the Evidence Based Funding formula and discussed how funding adequacy can be reached through other mechanisms. The panelists from the National Panel of Experts validated Illinois' work in ECEC and deliberated the Commission's recommendations in the context of Illinois ECEC and other state's systems, specifically emphasizing how the recommendations should place families at the center.

Presenters: Harriet Dichter, Sherri Killins Stewart, and Linda Smith from the National Panel of Experts

Materials: Racial Equity Working Group Scope, Technical Working Group Cost Estimation, Sylvia Cotton Center Memo on Racial Equity in Child Care: Supporting Families Who Use Family, Friend and Neighbor Care, National Panel of Experts Ideas and Summary

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### Racial Equity Working Group Meetings – October 26, 2020 – October 29, 2020

#### Racial Equity Working Group Meeting #1 – October 26, 2020

1. Review Commission Recommendations and Working Group objectives, scope, and deliverables
2. Understand who will be most impacted, who will benefit or be burdened
3. Discuss whether the recommendations promote racial equity

Materials: CUE Showcase Presentation, Early Childhood Funding Commission Racial Equity Working Group Scope, GOECD Project Proposal, CUE Racial Equity Working Group Recommendations Analysis: Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding, CUE Racial Equity Impact Analysis (REIA) Framework, Early Learning Council Racial Equity Definition and Priorities, Racial Equity Impact Assessment Guide, Activating Racial Equity in Illinois (slides), REIA Example: CDOT Chicago Complete Streets, REIA Example: National Teachers Academy

#### Racial Equity Working Group Meeting #2 – October 29, 2020

1. Review Monday's meeting and timeline
2. Understand who will be most impacted, who will benefit or be burdened
3. Discuss whether the recommendations promote racial equity

### Full Commission Meeting #12 – November 10, 2020

#### Meeting Goals:

1. Relate the Commission's work thus far to last month's feedback from the national panel of experts
2. Reconsider our Commission's timeline
3. Share feedback on preliminary findings of the Racial Equity Working Group
4. Understand ongoing work of the Technical Working Group

Meeting Summary: In reviewing the National Panel's comments, the Commission discussed the ways the recommendations could tailor more specifically to the goals of this work. The Commission discussed its timeline for synthesizing the working groups' findings into a final report that sets the right tone for short- and long-term changes to the ECEC system. The Racial Equity Working Group advised the Commission to be particularly intentional in prioritizing racial equity work, particularly given the Working Group's late emergence in the Commission's work.

Materials: Early Childhood Funding Commission National Panel of Experts Crosswalk Analysis

### Racial Equity Working Group Meetings – November 20, 2020 – November 30, 2020

#### Racial Equity Working Group Meeting #3 – November 20, 2020

1. Debrief Commission meeting and Working Group remaining timeline
2. Understand who will be most impacted, who will benefit or be burdened
3. Discuss how the recommendations can promote racial equity

#### Racial Equity Working Group Meeting #4 – November 30, 2020

1. Review work thus far

## Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education & Care Funding

### *Commission Report: Findings and Recommendations*

2. Discuss engagement and decision-making in implementation
3. Create framework for evaluating and reporting on implementation

### Full Commission Meeting #13 – December 8, 2020

#### Meeting Goals:

1. Relate the Commission's work thus far to last month's feedback from the national panel of experts
2. Reconsider our Commission's timeline
3. Share feedback on preliminary findings of the Racial Equity Working Group
4. Understand ongoing work of the Technical Working Group

Meeting Summary: The Racial Equity Working Group emphasized that providing equitable access to high-quality ECEC will not, alone, solve racial inequity in Illinois, and that equitable ECEC requires greater community engagement than the Group had time for. An inter-agency team has formed between ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS to analyze Commission's recommendations in the context of the agencies' work. The Commission offered feedback on the draft outline of their final report and discussed how the recommendations will incorporate all the working groups and will influence systemic accountability.

Presenters: Adam Slade and Vanessa Lee, Senior Fellows with Chicago United for Equity

Materials: Early Childhood Funding Commission National Panel of Experts Crosswalk Analysis

### Working Group Meetings #9 – January 15, 2021 – January 19, 2021

The Funding Adequacy, Funding Mechanisms, Management & Oversight, and Inclusion Working Groups each met one last time with the following goals:

1. Discuss current recommendations, in light of external feedback provided to the Commission
2. Recommend any needed modifications and/or additions to:
  - a. The focus of the recommendations themselves
  - b. Any context within the report
  - c. Any information about planning, next steps, or implementation considerations

Materials: Early Childhood Funding Commission report Outline (Draft), CUE Racial Equity Analysis Report, External Feedback Summary, Feedback Template, Commission Feedback Outline, Early Childhood Funding Commission National Panel of Experts Crosswalk Analysis, Commission Web Survey Findings Summary, Child Care Advocates United: Letter to the Commission; Fight Crime Invest in Kids Public Comments from Randy Yedinak, Gads Hill Public Comments from Maricela Garcia, Illinois Action for Children: Memo to the Commission on Racial Equity in Child Care, Illinois Early Childhood Funding Coalition: Letter to the Commission on Stakeholder Engagement, Illinois Federation of Teachers: Letter to the Commission, Latino Policy Forum Public Comments on Prioritizing English Learners, Mission Readiness Public Comments From Brigadier General Stephen Curda, Ready Nation Public Comments from Lisa Sevegnago, Teach Plus: Letter to the Commission on Lack of Pay Parity, Joint Letter to the Commission on Community Collaborations, Start Early; Letter to the Commission on Strengthening Home Visiting, Voices for Illinois Children and YWCA Metropolitan Chicago: Letter to the Commission, Illinois Early Childhood Funding

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Coalition: Letter to the Commission on Implementation, Crisis Nursery Coalition of Illinois: Letter to the Commission, Start Early Feedback on Commission Report Outline, Feedback for Working Groups, questions from 12-10 and 12-16 Town Halls, Feedback Template for Working Groups, External Feedback Summary

### Stakeholder Meetings

#### Provider Focus Groups – August 13, 2020 – August 14, 2020

The Early Childhood Funding Coalition, an advocate coalition that has helped inform and supplement the work of the Commission, convened two focus groups of providers to weigh in on Commission recommendations, focusing on Management & Oversight.

#### Provider Focus Group #1 – August 13, 3030

Participants: 8 Chicago providers, 2 system and advocacy support individuals

Takeaways:

- Need to clearly define measures of success for centralizing governance and funding mechanisms. Metrics should include child outcomes and kindergarten readiness.
- Creating a new agency would elevate issues, but if consolidated - it should be at IDHS. ISBE is more focused on academics and K-12.
- Racial equity should be central to the commission across all aspects of the work, and not just on the back end as a reflective 'lens.'
- System needs to be able to include and support small providers, including during the RFP process, to be successful.
- Regional representation is essential in a new or consolidated agency.
- Some providers have concerns about RFP and contracts vs. vouchers. The former offers more stability, but the latter offers more family choice.
- A new agency could provide opportunities for creativity, innovation, and streamlined communication.
- Parents must be engaged as stakeholders.
- Quality should be a focus, and outcomes (children and families) should be on the forefront and driving the conversation.
- Children and outcomes need to be more prevalent in the recommendations and not only focused on providers and agencies.

#### Provider Focus Group #2 – August 14, 2020

Participants: 6 providers from Chicago, broader Cook County, Peoria, and Rockford

Takeaways:

- If creating a new agency is the choice, there is concern over the transition process, continuity once the Governor's administration changes, and potential funding shortages in the agency when the state hits hard economic times. It is recognized that the upside of one agency would better meet the needs of children, families and providers.

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- For historically marginalized communities, it is important to think of adequacy with both services and resources. Specifically, support for new providers in navigating the RFP process is critical. Providing an equal opportunity is not equitable.
- There should be data-informed, regional strategic planning in communities to reduce oversaturation and underserved disparities; this could mitigate the competition for resources that occurs between communities.
- Funding formulas should include generous salaries for the workforce and should seek to eliminate the disparities between regions.
- Some believe the flexibility providers were given during the pandemic was beneficial and should be made permanent.

### Parent Focus Group – August 20, 2020

The Early Childhood Funding Coalition, an advocate coalition that has helped inform and supplement the work of the Commission, convened a focus group of parents to weigh in on Commission recommendations, focusing on Management & Oversight and Funding Mechanisms.

Participants: 9 parents from Chicago, Chicago metro, and southern Illinois

Takeaways:

- Creating a new agency would allow for more cohesion, establish a new culture, and potentially mitigate change under a new administration.
- Efforts that demonstrate equity should be included in an evaluation of providers.
- The current process for applying for CCAP is long, complicated, and leaves out parents who cannot afford child care but do not qualify for assistance.
- Many parents expressed concern that multi-year contracts may have the unintended consequence of lowering the quality of care or causing providers to get complacent.
- Early Intervention services should be expanded and offered in native languages.
- Communication with parents should be budgeted into any new plans and be available in multiple languages.
- The ECEC workforce needs to be better supported for children and families to be better supported.
- Parents wanted to know about the commission's priorities—is it expanding access?

### Commission Web Survey – August 2020 through December 2020

Goal: Gather community input that would inform the Commission's work, a survey was distributed to providers, educators, advocates, and families through state agency listservs, advocacy organizations, and word-of-mouth in communities.

Questions:

1. How can the State ensure better access to high-quality ECE and child care services in your community?
2. What are the things that make it difficult for you to find child care and early education programs in your community?
3. What should the Commission consider when thinking about how to improve access to child care and early education programs for all children birth to age five?

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#### 4. What else do you want the Commission to know or think about?

Major themes from responses:

- Make ECEC options more affordable
- Increase availability of ECEC programs/slots
- Invest in recruiting, developing, and retaining the ECEC workforce
- Need for high quality programs and staff
- General need for more ECEC funding
- Align ECEC schedules with work or school hours and provide families with transportation assistance
- Centralize and intentionally disseminate information about ECEC options

#### Commission Town Halls – December 10 & 16, 2020 and January 14, 2021

Goals: Stakeholders will engage with Commissioners, learn more about the Commission’s draft recommendations and process, ask questions and share feedback.

Participants: 500+ providers, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders attended. The December town halls were also livestreamed and posted to the Advance Illinois YouTube channel.

Questions Summary:

- How would a newly centralized system interact with parents and providers and would local systems be maintained?
- How would definitions of quality be determined in a revamped system?
- How would family needs be met by increased access in underserved and marginalized communities, and communities that are not considered underserved but still struggle to find affordable care?
- How were wages considered in cost modeling?
- How did the Commission consider various types of expertise and other models?
- What systems would exist to improve workforce development?
- How would programs for children with disabilities be made more accessible and sustainable?
- When and how will the recommendations translate into implementation?

**Appendix 3: Linked Documents**

- Illinois Cost Model for Early Childhood Education and Care Services
- Racial Equity Working Group Recommendations Analysis