

# Tips for Writing and/or Delivering Testimony

*as ISBE's Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) Budget Hearings*

Oral testimony is being limited to three (3) minutes per person. These notes are meant as a guide; please be sure to personalize your own testimony with your own perspective and intergrate your own voice as much as possible, for variety and authenticity!

## **Introduction:**

- Thank the Illinois State Board of Education for the opportunity to help shape its budget request for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Note your perspective, and your focus: I'm a (parent, teacher, early childhood provider, etc.). I would like to address supports for our state's youngest learners — meeting both their immediate and their long-term needs.
- Add more about why early care and education are so important to you, to your community, to our state. Personal stories are extremely powerful!

## **Talk about immediate needs,** specific to the next Illinois state budget (FY 2023):

- The Early Childhood Block Grant supports preschool for children 3 to 5 years old, as well as Prevention Initiative services for infants and toddlers. I applaud you at the State Board, and other Illinois policymakers, for expanding and improving these programs over the years.
- But it's clear that we're still falling far short of meeting the needs of kids and families statewide. The COVID-19 pandemic has only added more challenges to what children, their parents and their educators are facing.
- For the FY 2023 state budget, the early childhood advocacy community is asking ISBE to include in its budget proposal an increase in state general revenue funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) by at least 10%. (This increase totals \$54.3 million over the final FY 2022 appropriation.)

*You could add any of the following reasons:*

- Because changes to the state's funding and governance structures may be on the horizon, this fiscal year presents a unique opportunity to make a significant down-payment on improving salaries in order to attract and retain teachers to the early childhood field.
- Early childhood educators - particularly those working in community-based settings - remain chronically undercompensated. A 10% increase would allow

ISBE to raise salaries for existing educators working for programs operated by community-based organizations and those working with infants and toddlers.

- We believe that additional investment should prioritize quality improvement over expansion efforts.

## **Talk about overarching, long-term needs:**

- And as we work to respond to the challenges of the past two years, we also need to keep in mind the big picture of our state’s system of early care and education — a system that includes not only the State Board and its Early Childhood Block Grant, but other state agencies, programs and funding streams.
- We need to commit far more resources and attention to early childhood, a system that helps our state’s young children to enter school prepared for success, as seen in recent data from the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) reports.
- We should improve not only funding adequacy, but equity to ensure resources get to the kids, families and communities who need them most. The KIDS survey once again indicated some of these challenges, in populations such as low-income households and children of color.
- The report from the Governor’s Funding Commission should be the map that will lead us to an improved early care and education system for all.

## **Conclusion:**

- Children are young only once. For them we must act boldly and decisively.
- We hope ISBE will act boldly when putting together its FY 2023 budget request, helping to focus attention on how we can best help young children’s development in the coming years.
- Thank you for your time and attention.

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