

Tips for Writing and/or Delivering Testimony

At ISBE's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) 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 please use your own words 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 2024):

- The Early Childhood Block Grant supports preschool for children ages 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.
- For the FY 2024 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 20%. This increase totals \$119.6 million over the final FY 2024 appropriation.
- In particular, we should put new resources towards quality improvement measures (include any of the following):
 - Early childhood educators remain chronically undercompensated. A 20% increase would allow ISBE to raise salaries for existing educators working for programs operated by community-based organizations, particularly those

working with infants and toddlers.

- Our youngest learners and their families benefit from a full-day of learning. The Board should expand more half-day preschool slots into full-day slots.
- With additional funds, the Board could strengthen programs' capacity to serve priority populations with complex needs, like children with disabilities or developmental delays, English learners, and children experiencing homelessness.
- We should support our early childhood educator workforce in pursuing training to continue their professional development by increasing ISBE's contribution to the Gateways to Opportunities scholarship fund.
- To better-meet the social and emotional needs of young learners, the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services should be embedded in more programs.

Talk about overarching, long-term needs:

(No need to include all of these points. Pick and choose what feels right to you.)

- We should improve not only funding adequacy, but equity, to ensure resources get to the kids, families and communities who need them most. The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey has indicated some of these challenges, in populations such as low-income households and children of color.
- The Early Childhood Funding Commission found our state's current level of funding for pre-K, child care and key birth to age 3 services is only 14% of what's required for a robust, high-quality system that meets on-the-ground needs. We need to do far better.
- 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.
- And as we work to respond to the challenges in the early childhood field, 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.
- 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:

- The early years are grounding in every human's life, and this is our chance to support optimal growth in young children.
- We hope ISBE will act boldly when putting together its FY 2024 budget request, helping to focus attention on how we can best help young children's development in the coming years.
- Thank you for your consideration.