



Public Comment – FY25 Illinois State Board of Education Budget Hearing

October 30, 2023

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Good afternoon, Dr. Sanders, Dr. Benson, ISBE Board members and Staff, my name is Beatriz Diaz-Pollack. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and add my voice to the chorus requesting a meaningful increase in K-12 Evidence-Based Funding.

I am a proud graduate of IL public schools, a former educator, and a parent of two enthusiastic public elementary school students.

I bring all those experiences to bear carrying out my role as Director of Education Equity for Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and as a member of the PEER IL coalition, where I have the honor of advocating alongside parents and community members working to address patterns of historic and persistent underinvestment in their local public schools.

As you know, EBF is intended to be one of IL's principal tools to ensuring that all districts have the resources necessary to provide each student with a safe, rigorous, and well-rounded learning environment and to direct new state funds to the most under-resourced districts. You've heard testimony regarding the tangible & positive impact of EBF around the state, but you've also heard of the urgent work that remains to be done.

The gap between EBF appropriations and the amount necessary for all districts to reach adequacy stands at \$4.8B. Meaning, according to calculations by national experts utilizing publicly available ISBE data, an annual investment of \$1.4B per year is necessary for all IL school districts to reach 100% adequacy by the law's target of 2027.

Undoubtedly, there are fiscal challenges inherent in committing to such an investment. However, this moment demands such a commitment.

In addition to persistent gaps in EBF funding and expected future fluctuations in local contribution components such as CPPRT, districts and the state are now facing the end of ESSER funding and a foreseeable fiscal cliff for many districts, especially those who utilized ESSER dollars to fill operating gaps generated by persistent disinvestment. Districts that serve higher numbers of Black and Latinx students, as well as larger populations of students from lower income households and Multilingual learners.

Delivery on ISBE's stated commitment to the advancement of equity in our public schools requires closing persistent EBF funding gaps that we know disproportionately impact students of color, students with disabilities and multilingual learners.

As you undertake the challenging work of compiling and advocating for a FY 2025 Budget think boldly. Name and advocate for the amount necessary to fulfill the promise of EBF and put Illinois districts on track towards 100% adequacy in 2027 – \$1.4B.

And in so doing, continue demonstrating with actions your stated commitment to systematically advancing equity and excellence in Illinois' public education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.