

To: Members of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding

From: Erika Mendez, Latino Policy Forum

Re: Consideration for English Learners in Commission's final report

Date: February 18, 2021

The Latino Policy Forum commends the Governor's Early Childhood Funding Commission for elevating the particular needs of English Learners within the Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding (e.g., meeting 14 and in the draft report). With close to one-third of our state preschool population being designated as English Learners (28%), it is imperative they are thoughtfully considered within any systemic changes to the early childhood system. This memo includes a request for a small, but significant, addition to the final report:

Requested insert on p.19 to add a section titled "Future Consideration of English Learners in Early Childhood Programs" following the paragraph on Early Intervention:

"The Commission deems it essential that future deliberations of the system consider how to ensure that current state (and federal) funding used to support early childhood English Learners continues to be used for these purposes and how oversight for these funds will be provided. Is current funding is administered by the State Board of Education and must continue in whatever governance model that moves forward. Future consideration must also be given to how local-level decision-making could be affected. The Commission report is not able to provide consideration for how English Learners might fare under the proposed new governance and funding mechanism's recommendations — more specifically, how a new governance structure might account for the English Learner cost factors within the Evidence-Based Funding formula. Currently districts may use federal Title I, II, III, and IV money for preschool English Learners. Further study should look at whether the recommendations may impact districts' use of funds for this purpose. Future consideration should also be given to program evaluation and for how English Learner early childhood programs and services will align with K-12 English Learner education. Commitment has been made within the Commission (during meetings and in the draft report documents) to ensure the system provides specific attention to English Learners, including engaging specialists and practitioners who work closely with this population."

The Latino Policy Forum thanks you for attending to this vibrant and growing child population and we extend ourselves as thought partners as the work continues to evolve.

Please feel free to direct any questions or concerns to Erika Mendez, emendez@latinopolicyforum.org