

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

From: Teach Plus Illinois ECE Policy Fellows: Elizabeth Carrick, Erean Mei, LaShanda Ticer-Wurr, Meghan Jensen, Tara Case

Date: February 16, 2021

RE: Teacher Advisory Council in ECE Decision Making

In 2019, the state of Illinois created the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding (Funding Commission), tasked with establishing 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. The funding commission has expressed the desire for stakeholder engagement. As ECE educators and 2020-2021 Teach Plus Illinois Policy Fellows, we believe that the funding commission should include a Teacher Advisory Council in the designing and implementation of the new agency. Teacher experiences and expertise in ECE will enhance policy makers' abilities to make better informed decisions and create a resilient system for ECE. Ultimately, the Teacher Advisory Council will create the best outcomes for Early Childhood Education, students, and families.

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER VOICE

Teachers are the ground level implementers of state policy. Including teachers in the decision-making process will:

- + *Ensure the policy is well designed, well received, and well implemented.*

During the implementation of Common Core and of a new teacher evaluation system, the Department of Education sought input from the National Network of State Teachers of the Year on how best to approach implementing the two policies. In partnership, policy makers and teachers agreed on a nationwide year-long delay in using test scores to evaluate teachers.¹

- + *Positively affect teacher retention.*

Teachers whose voices are heard are more likely to continue teaching and take on leadership opportunities within their schools and communities. Turnover is lower, and quality teachers feel more satisfied in their careers.²

States and districts that include teacher voice within the decision-making process have found that this improves outcomes for children. Illinois models of including teacher voice in policy initiatives include:

- + *The Illinois State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board (SEPLB) is required to have 10 classroom teachers in public schools serve on its membership. SEPLB provides support to ISBE regarding teacher training, teacher preparation programs, exams and licensing standards, and more.*
- + *Chicago Public Schools established a Teacher Advisory Council to help develop and improve programming within the district, such as strengthening intervention supports, as well as recruitment and retention of teachers of color.³*
- + *The Diverse and Learner Ready Teachers (DLRT) Network in Illinois developed a set of professional standards for culturally responsive practice and are currently planning professional development for implementing these standards statewide.⁴*

ADVISORY COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS

The advisory council will

- + Help in decision making around ECE program and policy development.
- + Contribute teacher insights to questions about workforce equity, professional support and development, as well as training opportunities.

The advisory council should represent the diversity of the ECEC workforce. Council members should:

- + Include teachers, teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, therapists, and special education service providers.
- + Work in various settings including but not limited to Preschool for All, Head Start, Early Head Start, district and non-district classrooms, private center- and home-based care.
- + Represent both the racial and demographic diversity of the state.

ENDNOTES

¹ National Network of State Teachers of the Year, “Engaged: Educators and the Policy Process.” 2015. Retrieved January 6, 2021 from <http://www.nnstoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Engaged-FINAL.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Secatore, L. (2021, January 14). Chicago Public Schools Teacher Advisory Council [E-mail interview].

⁴ Illinois State Board of Education. (2020, December 16). *Illinois State Board of Education Implements New Teaching Standards to Better Serve Diverse Population of Students*. [Press release]. Retrieved January 6, 2021, from <https://www.isbe.net/Lists/News/NewsDisplay.aspx?ID=1349>