

# Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

## *Meeting Minutes*

*June 16, 2020*

### **Opening Remarks (12:00-12:20 PM)**

Following roll call, Senator Manar welcomed Commissioners and members of the public and thanked them for joining the virtual meeting of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding.

Following this, Senator Manar, Leader Currie, George Davis, and Secretary Hou shared remembrances of the late Maria Whalen, President and CEO of Illinois Action for Children. Senator Manar shared Governor Pritzker's proclamation in Maria's honor.

Following this, Senator Manar, Leader Currie, and George Davis shared reflections on the importance of the Commission's work in light of recent incidents racial injustices.

Senator Manar then shared the goals for the meetings, notably defining a process to apply a racial equity lens to the Commission's work and discussing initial conclusions from Management & Oversight and Funding Mechanisms Working Groups.

### **Racial Equity Plan and Technical Working Group (12:20 – 1:00 PM)**

Leader Currie introduced the Commission's proposal for formally incorporating a racial equity lens into its work. She noted the heightened priority on this given recent events. She shared that the Commission has two key questions to answer:

- First, should the Commission formally adopt the Early Learning Council's definition of racial equity as our own?
- Second, should the Commission establish a working group to conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment of our recommendations?

Leader Currie invited Phyllis Glink to share background on the Early Learning Council's Racial Equity work.

Ms. Glink shared background on the Early Learning Council and that the ELC is committed to holding itself accountable to a system that is racial equity-informed and that works toward racially equitable outcomes. She noted that this is a journey that requires continuous reflection. She shared that their definition of racial equity came from work with BUILD Initiative beginning in 2016. She highlighted the importance of a consistent definition of racial equity and shared an openness to continually evolving the definition in partnership with the Commission. Co-chair Davis shared his perspective as a member of the ELC during the development of this work and the definition of racial equity.

In response, several Commission members asked for a bolder statement on racial equity as a supplement to this definition, specifically highlighting the urgency of racial equity in light of current events which highlight systemic oppression and the importance of early childhood solutions in dismantling oppression. There was strong agreement across the Commission that this additional formal statement is needed. Other recommendations included adjusting the title to be inclusive of race and ethnicity and reviewing the Commission's guiding principles to include stronger in language about racial equity. Several Commission members volunteered to be a part of this Working Group (including Commissioners Bela Mote, Evelyn Osario, and Cathy Mannen). Bethany Patten told Commissioners they may also reach out directly to express interest.

# Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

## *Meeting Minutes*

*June 16, 2020*

Leader Currie thanked Commission members for their feedback. She noted that the Commission will temporarily adopt this definition and charge a to-be-developed Racial Equity Working Group with development of a companion statement.

Leader Currie then moved the group toward consideration of the recommendation to form the Racial Equity Working Group, which will be tasked with conducting a racial equity impact assessment of the Commission's recommendations. The importance of an outside facilitator for this group was noted. There was agreement that the Commission must ensure that not only should racial equity be prominently considered in the Commission's recommendations, but also over time in the implementation of those recommendations – that there must be continual evaluation of the impact on racial equity through data, and the ability to implement changes when disparities are seen or persist. After discussion, Leader Currie thanked the Commission for their thoughtfulness and asked for any dissent on the formation of a Racial Equity Working Group, of which there was none. Leader Currie noted that this working group will be formally established.

Senator Manar echoed Leader Currie's thanks, and moved the Commission to the topic of a Technical Working Group. He noted that the Working Groups are getting closer to bringing forward recommendations, and as they move ever deeper into these discussions, questions around implementation are arising. He reminded Commissioners that the final deliverable will not include a detailed implementation plan or detailed recommendations on rules changes. However, in order to create a legislative blueprint that responds to the Commission's charge, it is necessary to complete due diligence to vet recommendations for ability to effectively implement. As such, he shared the recommendation that the Commission formally establish a Technical Working Group with the charge of "Conducting due diligence and vetting to lay a foundation for successful implementation of the Commission's recommendations." This group would launch in the next month and run through the end of the year. The Working Group will operate outside of the Commission in support of the Commission, and will include a small number of people inside and outside of state government with expertise in the laws, rules, policies, and procedures related to the recommendations and what it will take to implement them. This group will bring its due diligence work to the Commission before we complete our final deliverable to help us vet the technical feasibility of our recommendations. The Commission agreed to move forward with this recommendation.

### **Management & Oversight Initial Conclusions (1:00 – 1:30 PM)**

Senator Manar introduced Robin Steans, Management & Oversight Working Group lead, to share the group's initial conclusions. He shared that these are not final recommendations; instead, this is a chance for the Working Groups to share their initial thinking with us and get feedback, input, and questions for further study.

Ms. Steans provided a reminder of the Management & Oversight Working Group charge, its approach to making decisions, its objectives for a future M&O system, and what capacities or roles and M&O function serves. She then shared the group's philosophy that this is about setting up an M&O system that allows for continuous improvement, not about a one-time conversion. She shared with Commissioners that the Group has discussed two key questions: should state-level administration be centralized or coordinated, and what components of each capacity are best done at the regional or local level. Ms. Steans then shared the Group's

# Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

## *Meeting Minutes*

*June 16, 2020*

initial conclusion that centralization is most appropriate (noting this is not decided if this should be within an existing agency or creation of a new agency). She shared reflections that centralization has greater potential to fulfill the capacities of a successful management & oversight system than coordination across multiple state agencies.

There were several questions raised by Commissioners that will inform the Working Group's thinking, including the importance of connections between ECEC and Kindergarten.

To the second question of the role of regional/local entities, Ms. Steans shared the Working Group's initial conclusion that some M&O capacities should be fulfilled at the regional or local level. She noted there is still more work to be done to refine this. Co-chair Davis noted that the regional/local role may help with equity and fairness across providers who may not have connections at the state level.

### **Funding Mechanisms Initial Conclusions (1:30 – 1:45 PM)**

Mr. Regenstein shared that he is hoping for feedback from the Commission either affirming the direction or identifying questions that the Group should further consider. He shared that the Group is gravitating toward a radically different approach to funding from what the state currently uses, and that this approach has been informed by the direction of management & oversight and the desire to bring together what are currently disparate parts of the ECEC system. The group recommends that funds should be allocated through a coordinated process with multiple state funding streams in collaboration with Head Start in a much more holistic way that cuts across multiple funding streams in child care and preschool. He shared that they are moving toward a recommendation with a targeted, equity-informed RFP for new providers which should focus on communities and children in greatest need. He acknowledged that there is more work to define this but this is a guiding principle. For returning providers, recognizing providers need much more stability, but paired with accountability, the group is considering distributing funding via formula through contracts with providers.

Commissioners asked several questions, including how this will ensure the state's continued focus on infants and toddlers. One commissioner acknowledged the challenge small business owners face in the current reimbursement structure, which could be alleviated through multi-year service contracts.

Given agenda time constraints, Senator Manar moved the meeting to Stakeholder Engagement, bypassing the brief updates from Funding Adequacy and Inclusion, and shared that Funding Adequacy and Inclusion Working Group leaders would bring their recommendations forward in detail in the next Commission meeting in July.

### **Stakeholder Engagement (1:45 – 1:50 PM)**

Co-chair Davis thanked Ms. Steans and Mr. Regenstein for their updates and thanked Commissioners for their feedback. He then reminded Commissioners of the work at hand for Stakeholder Engagement. He acknowledged that the virtual environment makes engagement work more challenging, but that it must continue, especially as the Commission moves into a phase of initial recommendations. He noted that while Working Groups have already engaged stakeholders directly, such as the Funding Adequacy Working Group, who has heard from dozens of school- and community-based providers on how the cost model should be revised to best reflect the cost of providing quality services, more voices must still be heard. Mr. Davis shared

# Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

## *Meeting Minutes*

*June 16, 2020*

that the Commission is formally calling for written feedback or input from anyone who would like to submit it, including Commission members, members of their organizations, and members of the public. Anyone wishing to submit feedback or recommendations should email their written statements to Bethany Patten at [bethany.patten@Illinois.gov](mailto:bethany.patten@Illinois.gov).

He opened for discussion on opportunities to consider. One Commissioner recommended the Home Visiting Task Force, and a member of the public recommended CCR&Rs. Mr. Davis recommended that Commissioners reach out to their respective organizations or groups to connect. Another Commissioner recommended a summary document be available in multiple languages.

### **Next Steps (1:50 – 1:55)**

Co-chair Davis thanked Commissioners and members of the public for joining the meeting. He shared next steps, which included continued virtual working group meetings, and an expectation for the Funding Adequacy and Inclusion Working Groups to bring their initial conclusions to the Commission for guidance and feedback to the next Commission meeting on July 14. He noted that the co-chairs will continue to assess the public health crisis and its impact on the Commission's work, priorities, and timeline. He asked for any questions, then moved to public comment.

### **Public Comment (1:55 – 2:00)**

Bethany Patten invited members of the public to make statements. There were no members of the public wishing to make further statements. The meeting was adjourned.