

Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

Meeting Minutes *September 15, 2020*

Introductions and Agenda (12:00 – 12:10 PM)

To begin the meeting, Bethany Patten took roll call and reviewed housekeeping items. Leader Currie thanked Commissioners for joining the meeting virtually. She posed to the Commission two questions for consideration during the meeting: 1) can the recommendations drafted thus far fulfill the Governor's charge, and 2) is there additional information needed to move toward consensus on the recommendations.

Leader Currie shared the goals and agenda for the meeting. Goals included the following: taking account of draft recommendations for the centralized system of funding and governance; determining what must still be addressed to fulfill the Commission's charge; and determining our path forward to resolve remaining questions. Agenda items included the following: hearing from leaders in the field on their experiences in today's system and discussing what has been heard through stakeholder engagement forums; continuing the discussion from last meeting on the draft recommendation of a centralized system of funding and governance; and discussing the path forward to evolve the recommendations through the remainder of the year.

Finally, Leader Currie reminded Commissioners of the Commission's charge, that the work pertains to ECEC within a broader system of state supports for children, and that the Commission is adhering to its Guiding Principles. Leader Currie emphasized the areas of the charge that the draft recommendations are designed to address, the critical nature of the timing of the recommendations and the need for bold recommendations, and the dual guiding principles of embracing bold system-level changes while recognizing implementation realities.

Provider Perspectives (12:15 – 12:45 PM)

Senator Manar introduced the first item on the agenda, which was to hear from providers in the ECEC field. He reminded Commissioners of the importance on continuing stakeholder engagement efforts and how those efforts are shaping recommendations. He then introduced the meeting's guest speakers, asking them to share their perspectives on today's system. He noted that questions should be sent to Bethany Patten for consolidation and distribution. Speakers were as follows:

- **Jeanine Woltman** – Coordinator, Glenbard Early Childhood Collaborative
- **Brenda Crisp** – Executive Director, Uni-Pres Kindercottage in East St. Louis

Following the provider perspectives, which focused on community-level early childhood infrastructure such as community collaborations, several Commissioners provided reactions and perspectives from their local experience. Pat Chamberlain and Lori Longueville described their experiences with their respective local collaborations and local infrastructure.

Co-Chair Davis then described findings from a public online survey seeking input and feedback on the Commission's charge and how to improve the early childhood system in Illinois. He said that there were three high-level findings repeatedly raised by respondents, including: early childhood services are not affordable for all Illinois families who need them; early childhood services are not available in all areas for all Illinois families who need them; and compensation for early childhood workers, including teachers, assistant teachers, and other professionals, is too low to create a sustainable workforce and does not match the requirements and expectations of the field. Teresa Ramos, on behalf of Shauna Ejeh, described focus groups organized by the Early Childhood Funding Coalition (a group of advocates that includes members of the Commission) whose findings were similar to those from the online survey.

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Potential Centralized ECEC System (12:45 – 1:30 PM)

Deputy Governor Ruiz introduced the next component of the agenda, which was a discussion on the draft recommendation of a centralized system of funding and governance. He asked Commission members to keep two questions in mind during the discussion: first, does this package of draft recommendations sufficiently fulfill our charge regarding funding mechanisms and its implementation (and, if not, what remaining questions or issues must be addressed to fulfill our charge); second, what more information do you need or what would need to change for you to support these recommendations.

The Commission then spent time in discussion around the recommendations. Members discussed several topics, including the following:

- The way that the recommendations might affect Head Start in Illinois
- Questions, concerns, and benefits of creating a new early childhood state agency
- Costs associated with consolidating within an existing state agency versus creating a new agency
- Recommending mechanisms to provide ongoing implementation guidance beyond the life of the Commission
- The need for a new agency to build capacity and infrastructure in the system
- The need for the Commission to further discuss the relationship between the state, regional, and local components of the early childhood system
- How to determine which unanswered questions must be resolved before the close of the Commission versus being resolved during an implementation phase
- How to integrate early childhood systems in an implementation phase, and which areas may still benefit from ongoing support from ISBE, IDHS, and DCFS even if a new agency is created

Next Steps and Path Forward (1:45 – 1:55 PM)

Following the discussion, Senator Manar moved the Commission forward to a discussion on the path forward and next steps. Senator Manar shared that the Commission's priorities between now and January 2021 are as follows: to solidify the recommendations with the feedback from the racial equity and technical working groups; and to thoroughly engage key stakeholders for feedback.

Senator Manar said that there are several opportunities for engagement, review, and pressure-testing of the recommendations. These include the racial equity and technical working groups, continued stakeholder engagement forums such as focus groups, and a national panel of experts who will join the October Commission meeting. Senator Manar encouraged Commission members to take the Commission's work thus far to their own networks and organizations and said that facilitation guides and talking points for these discussions are available to Commission members to support them in their outreach. He also asked Commission members to submit questions for the national panel of experts in advance of the October Commission meeting.

Public Comment (1:55 – 2:00)

Three members of the public made comment: Randy Yedinak, Emnet Ward, and Beata Skorusa.