

# Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

## *Meeting Minutes*

*March 1, 2020*

### **Opening Remarks (11:30 – 11:35 AM)**

To begin the meeting, Katie Morrison-Reed took role call and reviewed housekeeping items. Deputy Governor Ruiz acknowledged that this meeting was the final Commission meeting after 16 months of work that was ongoing through a pandemic, through ongoing injustices, unrest, and uncertainties. Deputy Governor highlighted recent good news related to the Commission's work, including the Governor's mention of the Commission's work in his budget address last month, as well as Dr. Theresa Hawley's recent testimony to the House Appropriations Committee, on the topic of "COVID-19 and the Child Care Crisis" as Congress plans for the next relief bill. In Dr. Hawley's submitted testimony, she referenced specifically how our Commission's work informed the pandemic response and informs future federal investment requirements.

Deputy Governor Ruiz congratulated the Commission for its recognition and congratulated the state team and providers on their pandemic response efforts. He also recognized Theresa Hawley for her work during the relief response and her congressional testimony, which has put Illinois ECEC in the national spotlight even more so than it was before. He then reviewed the agenda, which focused on Commissioners sharing their final reflections on the work, and included updates on the final report, next steps in preparation for sharing the report with the Governor, and public comment.

### **Final Report Updates (11:35 – 11:45 AM)**

Governor Ruiz reminded Commissioners that they received the final report last week, and likely saw meaningful change in the report from the initial draft. He explained that staff received feedback on the draft report from many Commissioners, and feedback was very consistent. He shared the key points of feedback and how that has been incorporated into the final report, including references to a new state agency, call-outs for infants/toddlers and geographies, the need to further study funding mechanisms for English Learners, clarity on implementation, and a summary of key recommendations. He paused to open up for questions. Excusing Co-Chair Manar's absence due to conflicting meeting, Deputy Governor Ruiz turned it over to Leader Currie to lead Commissioners in reflection.

### **Commissioner Reflections (11:45 – 12:15 PM)**

Leader Currie presented this opportunity for Commissioners to share their reflections on the Commission's work, the process, the report, and the road ahead for Illinois children. She invited any Commissioners to speak who wished to do so. Carrie Stewart called on Commissioners, who shared reflections along the following themes:

- Gratitude for the ability to participate in the Commission and appreciation for the diversity of perspectives expressed by its members
- Pride in the work and their desire to see that work continue beyond the Commission
- Commitment to the focus on racial equity and inclusion of children with disabilities and English Learners
- The need for public engagement and public trust in this work that is so significant to the children and families of Illinois
- The importance of early childhood care and education and its larger and deeper social impacts

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On behalf of the four co-chairs, Deputy Governor Ruiz thanked the Commissioners for centering children and families; its focus on racial equity and willingness to call themselves out on shortcomings along the way; doing the hard work, digging deep into research and analysis, having challenging conversations; never wavering in its commitment during a particularly turbulent time; and thinking bold as the Governor asked them to. He also recognized the leadership of Maria Whelan who had inspired and championed the Commission's work and who passed away last June.

Deputy Governor Ruiz reminded the Commissioners that these are recommendations to the Governor which he may choose to accept or not. He asked Commissioners to stand ready to support his direction toward our common goals of improving ECEC for all Illinois children and families, honoring the hope that the Commission's work will lead to a simpler, better, fairer early childhood education and care system for all children birth to age five. He thanked all involved in this Commission, the working groups, and the many constituents who have participated in town halls, provided public comment, and lent expertise.

### **Communications Planning (12:15-12:30 PM)**

Leader Currie shared that, while co-chairs and staff do not have a firm timeline, there are general next steps that are expected to happen this month:

- Communications materials will be finalized
- The plan for sharing the report with the Governor will be finalized and the report will be provided to the Governor
- This work and recommendations will be communicated publicly
- As the Commission closes out, the process will shift gears to implementation planning with feedback from the Governor

Leader Currie explained that, as noted in the last meeting, support from the McCormick Foundation has allowed the Commission to retain the services of a communications firm, Kivvit, to help ensure the work of this Commission is communicated effectively to stakeholders. She explained that a key aspect of Kivvit's work is to create a publicly consumable summary document, called a "primer," which features user-friendly language, and creates a visual format for the recommendations. Leader Currie thanked the several members of this Commission who volunteered to guide the development of the primer over the last week, and paused for any of the volunteers have thoughts to share on the primer. She thanked the Commission for its commitment to this work and to children and families in the state.

### **Public Comment (12:30 – 1:30 PM)**

Jennifer Hernandez introduced members of the public to give their comments, of which there were 23.