

Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding December 16, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Opening Statements (1PM – 1:45PM)

Governor JB Pritzker, introduced by Bela Moté of Carole Robertson Center for Learning, provided an overview of work to date in Illinois for early childhood education, made announcements of improvements to early education funding, set the audacious goal for Illinois to become the best state for families with young children, and encouraged the Commission to think boldly in its recommendations. There was a short break after for media.

After housekeeping announcements, Commission co-chairs kicked off the meeting by acknowledging the work done to date, emphasizing the Commission's charge and urgency of this work, and referencing the importance of completing recommendations in line with the Governor's budget and legislative cycle.

Today's goals were noted as 1. Grounding the Commission in its charge and scope, its importance and urgency for Illinois' children and families, and the great work and progress to date that sets the stage for the work ahead, and 2. Setting priorities for the Commission's future work.

Commission Member Introductions (1:45PM – 1:50PM)

Commission Members individually introduced themselves and their affiliations.

Commission Meeting Norms (1:50PM – 2:00PM)

Norms by which the Commission will run were shared. There were no questions.

Overview & Discussion of Illinois Early Childhood Education and Care (2:00PM – 3:00PM)

Dr. Theresa Hawley, First Assistant Deputy Governor for Education, provided an overview of Illinois' Early Childhood Education & Care Services. She acknowledged the many organizations that contributed to the report. She then provided an overview of the importance of high-quality early childhood education and care and the need equitable access. She proceeded to provide a history of Illinois' successes in ECEC. Commission members shared reflections on successes in ECEC. Specific items mentioned included the State's focus on home visiting, dual-language/bilingual programs, promotion of blending & braiding funding and programs, acknowledgment of the efforts and dedication of providers and workforce, recognition of the strong history of public/private partnerships, and appreciation for bipartisan support.

Dr. Hawley then led an overview of the challenges facing the ECEC system – notably equitable access, adequate funding, and system stability. Commission members shared reflections, including noting the need to consider race, the challenge of misaligned timing of funding vs. expenditures and the resulting sustainability challenges including teacher retention, the criticality of wages as a contributor to the staffing crisis, the challenging position providers are put in to collect fees and the impact that has on access and attendance, logistical challenges stemming from multiple programs, facility challenges, and the clear inequities in programs offered.

Dr. Hawley concluded by noting that it is time for Illinois to innovate once more. She noted that can reshape our funding model to provide equitable access to quality ECEC, and that this would require more equitably distributing funding to those that need it most, defining what adequate funding is for quality early learning and child care, lowering the burden on providers to access funds, building capacity to serve our children across the state, and simplifying our governance & distribution structure to build accountability and enable integrated support for ECEC. Commissioners thanked her for her thorough overview.

Timeline & January Meeting Planning (3:00PM – 3:15PM)

Co-chairs noted that the Commission is working backwards from January 2021 in the work ahead, and the Governor's FY22 budget address and legislative timing are important timeline considerations. Commission

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members aligned on two important tasks: first to reimagine a high-quality system, and second to make recommendations on how to accomplish this over time. They acknowledged the challenge of this work, even in comparison to recent K12 work. Finally, they acknowledge that it is not “free” to not spend more as a State – that the “cost” is currently being borne in opportunity costs (such as parents who cannot work) or in subsidies to the system (such as low paid ECEC employees). They agreed these must be considered.

Deputy Governor Ruiz reemphasized that the Commission needs to understand the total number (adequacy) and how to get there – including how to distribute funds and who the parties are – as its charge. He noted that the next course of action is to formalize the Commission’s approach to accomplishing the work ahead and launching a series of analyses that will put the Commission in a position to develop recommendations to the Governor over the course of the summer and fall 2020. He noted that the Commission’s next meeting will be Tuesday, January 14, 2020, in the Chicago & Springfield V-Tel rooms at state offices.

Public Comment (3:15PM – 3:45PM)

The meeting was opened for public comment. Members of the public were provided two minutes each for public comment. Twelve attendees signed up and eleven commented.

Meeting Adjourned (3:45PM)

The Deputy Governor thanked the Commission members for their willingness to support the important work ahead and adjourned the meeting.