

**Early Learning Council (ELC) Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs**  
August 14th | 11am-12pm

**Total Attendance: 55**

**Co-Chairs** Alicia Lynch-Deatherage (ISBE), Celena Sarillo (Start Early)

**State Agency Members:** Ann Whalen (IDEC), Maya Portillo (IDEC), Christi Chadwick (IDEC), Jean Davis (IDHS), Mackenzie Getz (ISBE)

**Presenters:** Mahi Mahmood (IDHS), Emma Watters Reardon (HFS)

**Attendees:** Angela Farwig, Anne VanderWeele, April Janney, Ashley Heidenrich, Azar Khounani, Bri Stormer, Celia Bartel, Christina Navarro, Chuck Hartseil, Dan Harris, Dawn Delgado, Debrah Clark, Denise Castilo Del Isolda, Denise Monnier, Donna Emmons, Elysia Aufmuth, Erika Mendez, Gina Ruther, Hannah Glick, Ireta Gasner, Jenni Purdue, Jennifer (Jenny) Wierzchon, Jill Andrews, Julianna Mitrius, Kathleen Kimmey, Kim Lamz, Kimberly Bianchini, Kirsty West, Lauri Morrison Frichtl, Lee Eklund, Loukisha Pennix, Marcy Mendenhall, Mario Perez, Mariana Osoria, Mendy Smith, Nancy Salvador, Patty Sherman, Phyllis Glink, Rosario Hernandez, Sara Slaughter, Sean Noble, Seth Rich, Shauna Ejeh, Tammy King, Tiffany Powell, Tracy Occomy

**Minutes**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Celena Sarillo welcomed participants to the second meeting of the ELC Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs. Celena reviewed the goals of the ad hoc committee, which are as follows:

- Ensure there's a common understanding of the implications associated with changes in federal funding and programs among early childhood stakeholders.
- Coordinate and support federal advocacy efforts to protect and enhance access to early learning programs.
- Consider adjustments to state programs, policies, and investments to protect and enhance access to early learning programs given changes in the federal landscape.
- Review and consider what types of supports early childhood providers need to protect and enhance access to early learning programs given changes in federal landscape.
- Support short term strategies as we inform long-term transition efforts.

**Federal Government Update: FY26 Senate Appropriations**

Celena then introduced a new standing agenda item – the Federal Government Update – where ELC Co-Chairs will work to provide relevant updates that pertain to early childhood that occur in-between meetings. Celena provided an update on the Senate Committee on Appropriations advancing the Labor, Health and Human services and education FY26 bill. The appropriation bill is very early stages. Relevant line items related to EC include:

- \$8.83 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant - an \$85 million increase over fiscal year 2025.

- \$12.36 billion for Head Start - an \$85 million increase over fiscal year 2025.
- \$315 million for Preschool Development Birth Through Five (PDG-B5)
- \$14.3 billion for IDEA Part B – a \$50 million increase from fiscal year 2025
- *Every other ECEC related line item is proposed as flat funded*

Celena then introduced two guest speakers to speak to Medicaid from Emma Watters Reardon (HFS) and SNAP updates from Mahi Mahmood (IDHS).

- Emma provided an additional resource from HFS:  
<https://hfs.illinois.gov/info/fedresctr.html>
- Discussion in chat during presentation:
  - While not Medicaid, we've done some work with DHS to also promote marketplace healthcare plans for the ece workforce - particularly in EI and child care if they don't have access to employer insurance. I know they have let some of the enhanced premium rebates expire so that will also get more expensive for folks.

### **Breakout Discussions and Share Out**

- Maya Portillo introduced breakout discussions and asked committee members to answer the following three questions:
  - Medicaid/SNAP cuts and changes on families, workforce members, and/or providers in Illinois broadly?
  - How do you feel the Medicaid/SNAP cuts and changes will impact your community?
  - What are some of your unanswered questions with today's presentation?
- See below for responses from the discussion

### Workforce Implications

- Concern about EC workforce leaving field for positions that offer private health insurance if Medicaid becomes too burdensome to access
  - Possibility of workforce shifting into other EC roles that pay more, less continuity of care

### Impact on Families Broadly

- Lots of anxiety among parents, uncertainty how changes to benefits will impact them
- Could find ourselves in a situation where more people need care to meet requirements as there's an exodus from the care workforce
- Have been thinking about the compounded impact on children and families. We know there will be an impact on multi-status families who are already facing other vulnerabilities due to the state of immigration, etc. Families facing multiple challenges due to the federal administrative cuts
- We are already putting so much on families and we know that when families lose services it is so hard to get them back into services later, distrust of government and support. Thinking about the impact on the whole family and system.

- Families may not know what is coming and we need to be really mindful about how we market this and we are prepared and we ensure that the scaffolding or transitional support for families is there.

#### Impact on Providers

- How will this impact license exempt home providers? If they are receiving SNAP but not the required work hours.
  - Emma Watters Reardon – there are exemptions built into the statute for people who are caring for people who have a disability regardless of that person’s age. But that person will have to prove, and we don’t know what that documentation process will look like.

#### Potential Implications on Access to Food/Nutrition

- Food retailers that rely on a high percentage of SNAP recipients could be impacted
- Tariffs and higher food prices could also reduce profit margins
- If retailers close, could increase food deserts
- Food banks already overwhelmed
- If retailers that rely on public benefits to supplement low wages lay off their workers, the workers also run the risk of losing benefits with work requirements
- What about CACFP? Will there be an overreliance on this program given cuts to food supports?

#### Implications for Funding: Appropriation Levels and Revenue

- Everything is important and we don’t want to be in a position where we are choosing one thing over another. It makes me think overall about in general the revenue. How do we increase revenue so we are not in a position of pitting programs against each other or making impossible decisions and choices?
- Where are the states priorities at the micro level and then how do we address the macro level? We are still addressing issues post-covid and now will need to serve families facing additional issues. We are thinking strategically about supports for families: where are the food banks, community health systems and how do they get all of the supports they need?

#### Additional Questions

- In the presentation, a very positive senate budget has been presented that was pro-ECE, when will the House budget be released?
- Do we know how many able-bodied individuals receive Medicaid?

#### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **Next Steps**

Alicia Lynch Deatherage shared next steps for the Ad Hoc Committee. She shared the next meeting will take place on August 28<sup>th</sup> from 11am-12pm and the topic will be focused on Head Start. Alicia noted that the committee co-chairs are working on testing out communication tools to ensure this group can more easily communicate between meetings.