



The Fiscal Year 2018 budget process has begun. The Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) hearings are the first step in determining next year's early childhood education budget. ISBE hosts three such hearings around the state, at which stakeholders help inform the drafting of its budget.

Background Information

- Far too many children in Illinois face significant hurdles to kindergarten readiness.
 - 42% of the state's infants, toddlers and preschoolers live in low-income households.¹
 - The achievement gap between low-income children and their wealthier peers is measureable by 18 months of age.
- The State Board of Education's efforts to protect and expand funding for early learning are greatly appreciated by early childhood providers and the families those providers serve.
- The FY2017 education budget included a \$79.5 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), setting this year's appropriation at \$393.7 million – a high-water mark for the program.
- Unfortunately, \$393.7 million is not enough; because of past state budget cuts, approximately 20,000 children lost access to preschool between FY2009 and FY2015.
 - We failed to prepare an entire generation of high-risk preschoolers for kindergarten.
- We are still deeply troubled by the lack of agreement on funding for other early learning programs (like DHS-funded home visiting services) and the supports young children and their parents need.
- The impact of the budget impasse and subsequent uncertainty of funding for these programs has created a significant disruption in services—a situation that only worsens with each passing day that no budget is signed.
- Until a comprehensive budget is passed that adequately funds the services children and families need – with the revenue to pay for it – the state of Illinois will be failing in meeting its basic obligations to its most vulnerable citizens.
- Although Illinois faces tremendous budget pressures, we must continue to invest in our youngest children if we want to have a job-ready workforce and a brighter economic future.

Preschool Expansion Grant

- Despite the challenges ahead, we thank the Board for its continued support of the Preschool Expansion Grant program.

¹ Living at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level

- The first \$20 million in federal dollars, only made possible by the state's commitment to growing the ECBG, allowed Illinois grantees to provide a full school day of high-quality early education services to 3,110 children in over 150 classrooms across 19 high-need communities.

FY2018 Budget Request

- I request that ISBE includes the following in its FY2018 proposed budget: At a minimum, a **\$50 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant**, which would fulfil the state's commitment to the federal government as part of the Preschool Expansion Grant, and continue our march back on a path towards Preschool for All.
- At a minimum, a **\$12 million increase for Bilingual Education**; while the number of English learners in our schools continues to rise, bilingual education funding has stagnated for years (and was reduced in both FY2015 and FY2016 by a total of \$2 million). Sufficient funds must be appropriated in order to ensure that preschool children receive the services they are entitled to by statute.