

Committee Hearing Name: Subject Matter On: Early Childhood Education Funding and Access to Early Literacy/JOINT HEARING WITH SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Date: September 16, 2020

Time: 12:00 pm

Group Represented in Testimony: Illinois Head Start/Early Head Start Community

Submitted by: Lauri Morrison-Frichtl/Executive Director of the Illinois Head Start Association

Written Testimony

We commend you for tackling early childhood funding and the need to identify a more effective and efficient way to fund early childhood programs. The need is great and we support any movement to enhance early childhood services in Illinois. During this conversation we believe it's important to be aware of the current federal investment in Head Start and Early Head Start. The federal investment of Head Start and Early Head Start in Illinois is \$402,983,457.00. 176 programs serve the most vulnerable/at risk children in every county across Illinois. Head Start is a two-generation program, serving both the child and the family. At Head Start/Early Head Start we're committed not just to the children we teach but to their parents too. Each program is locally designed based on community needs and follow the most stringent standards, more so than any other early childhood program. Comprehensive services, including critical health services, mental health services, intentional work with families, school readiness goals, and a research based curricula and assessment, are provided by credentialed staff.

Quick Facts About Head Start in Illinois:

- ✓ Over 31,000 children served in Head Start.
- ✓ Over 11,000 children served in Early Head Start.
- ✓ 2,320 classrooms.
- ✓ 74% have income below 100% of the federal poverty level.
- ✓ 9% receive public assistance such as TANF and SSI.
- ✓ 3% are foster care children.
- ✓ 6% are homeless.
- ✓ 11 % are children with disabilities.
- ✓ 249,992 home visits were conducted last school year.
- ✓ 10,731 Head Start/Early Head Start jobs and over 20% were former parents.

As we invest and grow early childhood services within Illinois the need to protect our federal investment is critical. Together, with state and federal dollars, we can reach more children. Let's invest wisely and ensure our resources are utilized to their fullest. The Illinois Head Start Association will be proposing legislation, for the fall veto session, to coordinate enrollment into Early Childhood programs that receive 90% or more of their funding through federal and state funds and that provide services for children from birth to 5 years of age. The Early Childhood Program Eligibility Screening Act shall provide improved program coordination to identify and serve Illinois' neediest children by avoiding duplication of services, supplanting of federal funds, and will maximize the use of Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) funds. In addition, by prioritizing families who meet the HS/EHS eligibility guidelines for enrollment into HS/EHS, it will free up enrollment slots for the other Early Childhood programs in the local community who have broader eligibility guidelines.