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Manuel Gonzales, Communications Manager
303-880-5954
mgonzales@latinopolicyforum.org



****For Immediate Release****

A New Equity Paradigm for English Learners: School Funding Reform in Illinois

The Latino Policy Forum applauds the Illinois General Assembly for prioritizing financial equity for schools. The freshly minted SB 1947 benefits all students across the state, which is a momentous accomplishment. The bill has specific benefits for one of the fastest growing segments of the student population: English Learners. The financial support comes on the heels of the new accountability plan for Illinois required by the “Every Student Succeeds Act.” The plan gives greater emphasis to the academic performance of English Learners.

The Forum’s efforts promoted an increase to funding for English Learners that will result in a total of \$38 million in new revenue, bringing the state funding to \$102 million for bilingual education. The new evidence-based model addresses the population proactively by ensuring that they are weighted in the base funding formula and guarantees that the funding follows the student, \$10 million dollars is the projected increase in this category. The formula also includes an additional \$28 million for school districts with high percentages of low income students and English learners to implement best practice. The state funding will now provide for this population in a sufficient manner and the potential is great.

Illinois could lead the nation with research-driven policy, long term accountability, and funding to promote high quality educational opportunities. Programs, such as dual language, have proven to be of benefit to both English Learners and their general education peers. School districts across the state have noted increased student achievement when these programs are properly financed and supported. The Forum spearheaded advocacy for this population and sees a new horizon full of hope that will build on the linguistic and cultural assets these students bring to our schools, communities, and state.

English Learners are now present in more than half of Illinois schools, with significant growth in suburban and downstate districts. This population has the potential to achieve as well or better as any child when supported with research based methodologies. Illinois has a history of educating English Learners with the appropriate policy.

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit www.latinopolicyforum.org.