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Illinois Releases Equitable ECE Funding Commission Final Report

In January 2020, Governor Pritzker [announced the development](#) of the [Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding \(Early Childhood Funding Commission\)](#). Commission members were tasked to reimagine high-quality early care and education services in Illinois. Yesterday, after 15 months, the Early Childhood Funding Commission [identified several opportunities to rebuild our early care system and pave the way toward a promising future](#).

Since the original announcement, the pandemic has brought systemic inequities to families of color to the forefront of public discourse. Black and Latino households across the state bear the brunt of the pandemic and the stressors that come with it. Prolonged periods of stress have detrimental implications on the cognitive and social development of children. This is particularly acute in the first five years of a child's life.

High-quality early care and education services play a critical role in mitigating these stressors, and most importantly, promoting the healthy development of Illinois children. The onset of COVID-19 threatens these communities' physical and economic well-being across the state, exacerbating existing household pressures.

Children and families from these communities are disproportionately more likely to face conditions that increase their vulnerability to COVID-19, including having caregivers designated as essential workers, relying on public transit, living in crowded housing, and having limited access to quality healthcare, food sources, and healthy living environments.

State closures of early care and education programs meant that children lost access to these critical child development and support services. These educational disruptions have the potential to impact subsequent educational and occupational attainment[¹]. To help close widening opportunity gaps, Illinois needs a fully funded, unified early childhood system responsive to the needs of racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse families in Illinois.

As we continue to develop a robust high-quality early care system, we must ensure racial equity and the needs of English Learners remains prioritized. With close to one-third of our state preschool population being designated as English Learners (28%), it is imperative that they are considered within any systemic changes to the early childhood system. The Forum is excited about this work and looks forward to our continued partnership with the state to ensure these priorities are elevated.

The Forum would like to thank Governor Pritzker and the leadership of Jesse Ruiz, Barbara Flynn Currie, George Davis, and Andy Manar. We have appreciated being thought partners to this process alongside our colleagues in the Illinois Early Childhood Funding Coalition.

The Illinois Early Childhood Funding coalition is comprised of several of our Acuerdo members, advocate partners, and early care and education providers. This coalition worked as an external partner to shape the recommendations.

[1] Yip, Tiffany. 2020. "Addressing Inequities in Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: How Education Policy and Schools Can Support Historically and Currently Marginalized Children and Youth". Society for Research in Child Development.