



**HELP US ADVOCATE FOR INVESTMENT IN EBF
AT THE FY25 ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET HEARINGS**

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will be hosting a series of hybrid budget hearings this October. We need the help of advocates to ensure that ISBE prioritizes an investment of at least \$550 million in new funds for the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula in its FY25 budget request. Please submit a testimony request today to help Illinois' public schools reach adequate funding.

WHY PROVIDING TESTIMONY IS IMPORTANT? AND WHY YOUR STORY MATTERS

Providing testimony is an opportunity for ISBE board members to hear how their decisions make an impact on the lives of students, educators, and communities. Your story has the power to persuade and change the level of investment that the state provides our school districts.

ISBE WRITTEN AND ORAL TESTIMONY TALKING POINTS AND SAMPLE TESTIMONIES

This mini toolkit includes:

- a series of talking points
- sample testimony
- social media assets to engage ISBE during the budget hearings

Feel free to use the talking points to craft your individual testimony, following the outline included in this toolkit.

3 Public Hearings will be conducted in-person and virtually:

- **In-Person: 4-7 p.m. Oct. 3 at 100 North First Street Springfield, IL 62777** – Submit request in writing by **Thursday, Sep. 28**. Speakers who submit online requests after the deadline are not guaranteed a time slot to speak and may present at the end of the hearing dependent upon availability of time.
- **Virtual: 4-7 p.m. Oct. 5^{PM}** – Registration deadline: 11:59 p.m. Oct. 2
- **Virtual: 1-4 p.m. Oct. 30^{PM}** – Registration deadline: 11:59 p.m. Oct. 25

For information on budget hearings, visit this link: <https://www.isbe.net/budget>

Sign up for written or oral testimony here: <https://www.isbe.net/budgetrequestform>

[Click here for a step-by-step overview](#) of the sign-up process. Additional instructions from ISBE can be found at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/FY25-Budget-Hearing-Instructions.pdf>

There is power in numbers! As you sign up to testify, you will have the option to submit written testimony or sign up for oral testimony. We hope you consider joining us for oral testimony. If you would like to sign up to provide written testimony, use the same sign up process and email your testimony to ISBE at isbefy25@isbe.net. (Be sure to include your Funding Request Reference Number).

If you would like support through any part of the process, including developing your testimony, please email Maty Ortega Cruz at mortegacruz@advanceillinois.org. If you need help finding your adequacy percentages for a school district, please email Mercedes Wentworth-Nice at mwentworth_nice@advanceillinois.org.

TALKING POINTS TO CRAFT YOUR TESTIMONY

Below are talking points that can be used for advocating for an additional \$550 million in EBF. While all these talking points are important, we encourage you to embed two to three of them that complement your testimony.

Importance of EBF Investments

- For decades, research has shown that funding matters in providing students the high-quality education they need to succeed in school and beyond.
- Since its implementation, the Evidence-Based Funding formula has proven to be a successful tool for increasing funding in K-12 schools while driving resources to the most underfunded districts. To date, the state has invested nearly \$1.8 billion in new tier funding and drastically reduced the number of severely underfunded schools in Illinois.
- The number of school districts that are significantly under resourced (districts at less than 60% of adequacy) has dramatically decreased from 168 school districts when EBF was passed to zero school districts this last year.
- Yet despite this meaningful progress, in FY24 over 1.3 million of the state's students are still in districts that are underfunded (districts at less than 90% of adequacy).
- I am here to recommend that ISBE requests at least \$550 million in new funding through EBF in FY25 to make progress toward ensuring all students have a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code.

It's Time to Accelerate Our Path to Full Funding

- According to 2022 estimates from the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, if we continue to invest an additional \$350 million each year it would take until 2038 to fully fund our schools – meaning if we keep on this path, an entire generation of students will be attending school in an underfunded system.
- Increasing our annual appropriation of new funds to \$550 million will accelerate our pathway to adequate and equitable funding in Illinois and allow hundreds of thousands more students to benefit from attending fully funded schools.

Fiscal Concerns and Budgetary Pressures

- Over the past 6 years, inflation has driven up the costs of adequately funding a school. What could be purchased with \$350 million in 2017, when the formula was passed, now costs \$437 million. The annual \$350 million increase is no longer an acceptable floor--we need to increase our annual investment if we want to accelerate the path to full funding.
- As the short-term federal pandemic funds expire in FY25, districts will be put in a difficult position and must make decisions on which learning renewal and recovery programs they will continue to invest in. Knowing that the state skipped a year in new EBF funding in FY21, a state investment of o \$550 in EBF will allow districts to make vital long-term investments in programs, staff, and resources needed on the long road to recovery.
- And while the state should be excited about the recent gains in district adequacy, some of it is temporary. As a result of reductions in tax exemptions, influxes in federal stimulus dollars and increased spending during the pandemic, districts have recently seen an increase in local resources via the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT). Although these increased funds have likely helped districts in the short term, these local resources are not sustainable and do not allow districts to make the long-term investments necessary for creating a healthy school system.
- The Illinois Department of Revenue projects that districts will see a decrease in Corporate Personal Property Tax (CPPRT) revenue, a key funding source, of \$667 million in FY24 (districts have already experienced a 9% drop from Jan- Aug this year). We must continue to increase state investments to ensure districts have sustainable funds at the ready to support the programs and investments that matter for student success.

Stimulus Funds are Expiring, but Learning Renewal is Ongoing

- The academic and social-emotional impacts of the pandemic have been deep and inequitable – and students, staff, and schools, are continuing to recover. Federal relief

funds helped support critical programs and services that are helping our schools to recover, but those funds expire next fall, putting learning recovery investments at risk.

- The challenges wrought by COVID-19 will reach beyond FY25 and the expiration of federal funds. Districts must continue investing in the supports needed to meet the academic, social-emotional, mental, and physical needs of students, families, and staff. Closing the gap to adequate funding in our K-12 schools is the least we can do to equip districts to support students whose learning has been impacted by the pandemic.

Equity Imperative

- Equity in education begins by ensuring all schools have the resources, support, and services for their students to thrive.
- Systemic inequities in K-12 education not only persist but were made increasingly worse by the pandemic. The EBF formula is the primary tool the state has to target new funds to our most underfunded districts. Funding the EBF with at least \$550M in FY25 is the best way for the state to redress historic inequities.
- Despite gains made by investments in the formula, students who are Black, Latinx, English Learners, or from low-income households are still the most likely to be in underfunded districts (districts below 90%).
 - *Feel free to use any of the below statistics in your testimony:*
 - In FY24, 84% of students from low-income households are in underfunded districts compared to 64% of students who are not from low-income households.
 - Today, 80% of English Learners are in underfunded districts, compared to 72% of students who are not English Learners.
 - Today, 87% of Black students and 83% of Latinx students are in underfunded districts, compared to 65% of White students.
 - In FY 24, 88% of urban students and 77% of rural/town students are in underfunded districts, compared to 57% of suburban students.
- In FY24, my school district [insert district name here] is funded at [X]% of full, adequate funding. That means we have a gap to full funding of \$(X) overall, and \$(X) per pupil. *[Advocates can pull FY24 numbers from [this sheet](#), or we can provide that information upon request.]*

Investments in Education Pay Off

- Investments in education matter – and they pay off.
- It is up to all of us to advocate for the resources that our K-12 districts sorely need. We urge ISBE to put at least \$550 million for Evidence-Based Funding in the FY25 proposed budget.
- We all know the payoff of investments in education can have for our students and families, but we can't forget the payoff for our state –

- better educational outcomes made possible by adequate, equitable education spending translates to economic growth, increased earnings and decreased unemployment.
- Sufficient school spending has also been tied to reduced crime rates and improved health outcomes over time.

ISBE BUDGET HEARINGS TESTIMONY STRUCTURE AND EXAMPLE

As ISBE is only allowing three minutes for each oral testimony, we recommend the following structure for your testimony:

1. Opening - Introduce yourself, your community, and tell ISBE why you are providing oral testimony. State your clear recommendation of at least \$550 million new dollars for EBF.

Example: I want to thank ISBE on behalf of [organization name] for the opportunity to testify [or offer written testimony]. I am here today to advocate for all Illinois students and recommend that ISBE prioritizes an investment of at least \$550 million in new funding for Evidence-Based Funding in the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) budget.

2. Body Copy - Make your case for why you are recommending ISBE should include at least \$550 million into EBF in its FY25 request. This area can be broken into two parts:

- **Your Story.** Share your community's story with ISBE. Include how this decision impacts you, your child, students, school, community, or school district. Why is this investment crucial to the success of those you are advocating for? Share the impact EBF has had on your community and what increased funding would mean to you. Consider:
 - How has EBF funding helped your child/student/school/district/community? Are there positions you were able to create or fill, programs you were able to invest in or grow, or positive impacts you're seeing?
 - What would additional resources allow your school/district to invest in? Elaborate here on the programming, staff, and supports you anticipate EBF dollars in FY25 will make possible, such as retaining staff, investing in professional development, keeping class sizes manageable, etc.
 - What learning renewal programs or supports will your school or district need to continue investing in to ensure that the learning renewal continues for students, educators, and families in your district? How can the long-term and sustainable funds from EBF be used to decrease the burden of the Federal funding cliff?
- **Additional Facts and Data.** We have provided suggested talking points in the previous section that you can use to craft your testimony.

Example:

Your Story: *Educators and students alike currently have a range of unmet needs that have been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; we now believe that these needs will continue*

to be present for many years to come. As a teacher of 21 years, I have witnessed a school year of extreme challenge among students and staff alike. A year like no other. The increase in mental health crises among students and staff who work with them, paired with the ongoing challenges of teaching during a public health crisis, has resulted in schools experiencing fragile ecosystems and a culture of uncertainty, which has unfortunately negatively impacted student learning and social-emotional development. In my role as a program coordinator and mentor to new teachers, I have held the hands of educators who claimed that they may not be able to make it through one more school day and who have questioned their profession choice. This is heartbreaking for our students and for my profession.

Additional Facts & Data: *Funding the EBF by at least \$550 million is essential to ensuring that all students, regardless of their zip code, have access to resources that will both remediate, as well as accelerate learning. It will also ensure that educators are fully supported in meeting the diverse needs of students through ongoing professional development and that Illinois schools are equipped with adequate tools to provide essential socio-emotional support to their students and staff. Considering the on-going pandemic and exponential increase in the needs of educators and students, we continue to witness a school year filled with greater challenges. To address these challenges, our schools need stable, sustained state investments.*

In my school district, 78% of students come from low-income homes, 20% are English Language Learners, and approximately 87% come from diverse racial backgrounds. In FY23, my district is funded at 75% of full funding...Unfortunately, this has caused my district to prioritize, at the school level, the needs of some students over others and the needs of some educators over others. My district has not been able to adequately address the needs of all students and educators.

I am heartbroken that this is the reality of the educational crisis in our state. However, we can fix it. Our students and educators need adequate funding to provide crucial resources in order to sufficiently rebuild their schools and communities, in a way that is responsive to their varying needs. We need school counselors and social workers, training for our staff in trauma informed practices, and an investment in socio-emotional programs. I believe our students and our schools can and will recover, but we must remain united in our efforts to support Illinois' children. This is why I encourage you to prioritize a request for at least \$550M for EBF to help our students and educators across the state who are continuing to experience the negative effects of their districts falling below full adequate funding.

3. Closing - Conclude your testimony with a soft call to action and thank ISBE for the opportunity to share your testimony.

Example: We, the [organization name or your name], appreciate ISBE for the opportunity to testify and your consideration of our recommendation. We sincerely hope you heed our recommendation so that Illinois students receive the quality education they deserve.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In the hours leading up to and during each of the hearings, send out the below posts on X, formerly Twitter, by simply clicking “Click to Tweet.” Feel free to modify the text in the post as you see fit.

Post 1:

POST OCTOBER 3

.@ISBENews @TonySandersSupt, we encourage you to prioritize \$550M for #EBF in FY25. It is vital to get our state to full funding sooner to support the academic, social-emotional, and physical needs of students, families and staff. #FundtheFormula

[Click to Tweet](#)

Post 2:

POST OCTOBER 5

.@ISBENews, prioritize \$550M for #EBF. Every Illinois student deserves access to quality educational opportunities that set them up for success. Funding the formula is critical to ensuring resources are distributed equitably! #FundtheFormula

[Click to Tweet](#)

Post 3:

POST OCT 30

EBF is working! It’s time we invest additional funds in our school districts so that we continue to make progress for current and future generations of Illinois students. @ISBENews, prioritize \$550M in FY25 for #EBF. #FundtheFormula

[Click to Tweet](#)