

#FUNDTHEFORMULA CAMPAIGN

JOIN US IN ADVOCATING FOR \$550M FOR SCHOOLS AT THE FY27 ISBE BUDGET HEARINGS

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2025

ISBE TESTIMONY TOOLKIT

Please submit a testimony request today to help ALL Illinois' public school districts reach full funding faster.



01

About the ISBE Hearings

Help Us Advocate For \$550M for Schools at the FY27 ISBE Budget Hearings

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will be hosting a series of hybrid budget hearings this fall. We need the help of advocates to ensure that ISBE prioritizes an investment of at least \$550 million for schools. Our advocacy will focus on ensuring that ISBE supports a \$450M investment of new funds for the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula as well as a \$100 million investment into Mandated Categoricals (MCATs) in its FY27 budget request. Please submit a testimony request today to help ALL of Illinois' public school districts reach full funding faster.

In this toolkit you'll find resources like talking points, sample testimony, and background on the Evidence-Based Funding Formula.

01 About the ISBE Hearings

In this toolkit you can find supplemental materials to prepare for your testimony and share with your network.

02 Talking Points

Elevate the need to invest \$550M new dollars into EBF for the upcoming school year. Modify the letter to highlight your experience and let your senator and representative know why funding is crucial for Illinois' children.

03 Sample Testimony

Share this toolkit and messages with members of your community. We need everyone's voice behind the #FundtheFormula campaign!

04 About FIF & EBF

Learn more about the Funding Illinois' Future coalition and the Evidence-Based Funding Formula

About the ISBE Hearings

For information on budget hearings, visit this link: <https://www.isbe.net/budget>. ISBE will hold 3 Public Hearings to be conducted in-person and virtually:

Date	Time	Format	Sign Up By	Link
Thursday, Oct 16	1–4 p.m.	Virtual	Oct 13, 11:59 p.m.	Sign Up Here
Tuesday, Oct 21	4–7 p.m.	Virtual	Oct 16, 11:59 p.m.	Sign Up Here
Written Testimony	–	Written	Oct. 31, 11:59 p.m.	ISBEFY27@isbe.net

Need support?

The Advance Illinois Community Engagement team will be hosting 3 office hours opportunities to support advocates in registering to provide oral testimony and/or submit written testimony:

Date	Time	Link
Tuesday, Oct 14	4–5p.m.	<u>Sign Up Here</u>
Thursday, Oct 23	9–10a.m.	<u>Sign Up Here</u>
Thursday, October 30	5–6p.m.	<u>Sign Up Here</u>

About the ISBE Hearings

Need additional information?

- [Click here for a step-by-step overview](#) of the sign-up process.
- We're here to help! Feel free to email the Community Engagement team at engagement@advanceillinois.org for support in crafting your testimony.
- District data (e.g., % adequacy):
emoges@advanceillinois.org.
- Check out our [Equity Dashboard](#) for a closer look at district-level funding.



03

Preparing your Testimony

About the ISBE Hearings

Your testimony is important because:

- **Your story has power.** ISBE needs to hear how budget decisions affect students, teachers, and schools.
- **Collective voices make an impact.** The more advocates who show up and provide either written or oral testimony, the stronger our case.
- **EBF drives equity.** Funding based on what schools *actually need* ensures all Illinois students, no matter their zip code, get the education they deserve.

On the next slide you will find some talking points that can be used for advocating for an additional \$550 million for schools. While all these points are important, we encourage you to incorporate two to three of them that best complement your testimony

Importance and Impact of EBF Investments

- 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. Thanks to EBF, the state is now investing over \$2.8 billion in new funds in the students and schools that need them most. This is drastically reducing the number of severely underfunded schools in Illinois.
- Because funds are prioritized for the most under resourced districts, EBF investments have lowered the number of students attending school in drastically underfunded districts (those at less than 70% of adequacy) from 1.2 million to 76,000 students. Indeed, EBF funding is the most equitable possible use of new state dollars.
- Put simply, EBF dollars are the most equitable investment the state makes in its students and districts.
- Yet despite this meaningful progress, in FY26 over 1.3 million of the state's students are still in districts that are underfunded (districts at less than 90% of adequacy).

Every Service, Every Student, Every School: Fully Funding Illinois Schools

- Due to persistent underfunding of MCATS, the state partially reimburses districts for these essential services, with districts receiving only \$0.75 for every dollar spent on transportation, \$0.32 for every dollar spent on free and reduced meals, and \$0.72 for every dollar spent on special education private tuition, resulting in a funding gap of over \$400 million across the state.
- The severity of this proration is undermining the impact of EBF. Every dollar the state underfunds MCATs is a dollar districts need to find elsewhere, putting pressure on Evidence-Based Funding. Underfunded MCATs don't just shortchange student-centered services— they dilute equity-focused EBF investments, trapping schools in a cycle of covering mandated spending at the expense of student opportunity.
- I am here to recommend that ISBE request at least \$550 million in new funding for schools in FY27 to make progress toward ensuring all students have a high-quality education, regardless of their zip code.
 - **This \$550 million would include at least \$450 million for EBF combined with a \$100 million investment in MCATs.**

Significant Budgetary Pressures for Schools

- Over the past 8 years, inflation has driven up the costs of education, and the state's \$350 million investment, while meaningful, doesn't go as far as it once did. What could be purchased with \$350 million in 2017, when the formula was passed, now costs over \$450 million. Combined with federal funding instability, districts are feeling more budget pressures than ever.

Equity Imperative

- Equity in education begins by ensuring all schools have the resources, support, and services for their students to thrive. Funding both Mandated Category 1 and EBF gives districts stability in providing essential, required services as well as the ability to grow to adequacy by investing in tutoring, advising, mental health supports, and more.
- 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 following statistics in your testimony:
 - 88% of students from low-income households are in underfunded districts compared to 78% of students who are not from low-income households.
 - 84% of English Learners are in underfunded districts, compared to 78% of students who are not English Learners.
 - 92% of Black students and 86% of Latinx students are in underfunded districts, compared to 70% of White students.
 - 90% of students in urban districts and 85% of students in rural/town districts, compared to 69% of students in suburban districts.
- In FY26, 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 FY26 numbers from [this sheet](#), or we can provide that information upon request.]

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How to provide testimony

Testimony Outline Example

Please note that **ISBE only allows three minutes for each oral testimony** (testimony can be given both in-person and virtually). To help ensure your testimony is effective and concise, we recommend the following structure:

Part 1 – Opening

- Introduce yourself + community.
- State your ask clearly: *"I urge ISBE to request at least \$550 million for Schools to ensure EBF gets \$450M and MCATs gets \$100M dollars for FY27."*

Part 2 – Your Story

- Share how EBF has impacted your school/district.
- Explain what more funding would make possible (staff, programs, student supports).
- Highlight the risks if funding doesn't increase (cuts, larger class sizes, fewer support).

Part 3 – Closing

- Thank ISBE board members for their time.
- Reiterate your ask for at least \$550M for Schools.

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About Funding Illinois' Future & EBF

Funding Illinois' Future

#FundTheFormula



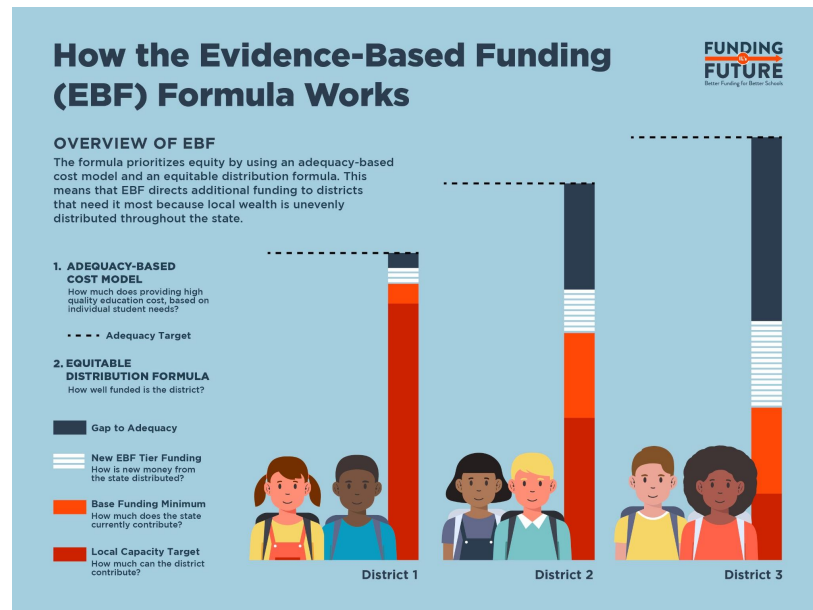
We are a coalition of more than 100 school districts, leaders, parents, educators, community, civic, and faith-based organizations that helped fix Illinois' school funding formula in 2017 with our fierce advocacy for the historic implementation of the K-12 Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula.

Today, we continue our fight for equitable and adequate funding for all K-12 schools and providing every Illinois student with the excellent education they deserve.

About the Evidence-Based Funding Formula (EBF)

In 2017, the landmark Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula overhauled Illinois' existing K-12 education funding system, replacing an outdated and inequitable structure with a formula that prioritizes the state's least well-funded districts, distributes funds based on a research-based estimate of what schools need to fully serve students, and considers differences in student needs across districts.

The Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula calculates education costs based on student needs and distributes new state dollars to school districts furthest from full funding. This is only possible when the state invests additional amounts through the formula each year.



Thank you for your advocacy!