

#FUNDTHEFORMULA CAMPAIGN

Urge the Budgeteers, House and Senate Education Committees to Prioritize \$550M for Schools in FY27

MAY

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

The Time to Act on Behalf of Illinois' Students is Now!

Call for \$550M for Schools (\$450M for the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) Formula and \$100M for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs) in FY27).



About Funding Illinois' Future

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.

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“My grandfather was a math teacher and is still employed at the school today. From the time I was a child, I’ve seen how a quality education can change the entire trajectory of a student's life. I want to be that for the next generation.

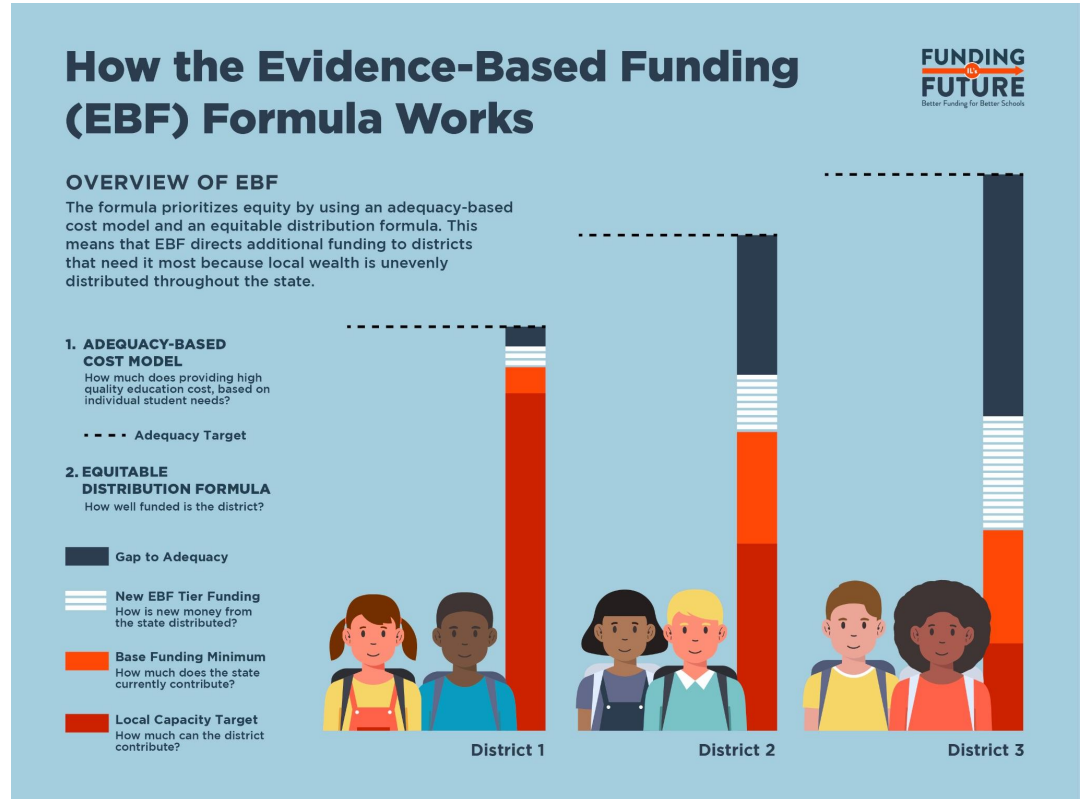
But I am worried that by the time I get my degree and walk back into a classroom, the stability that helped me succeed will be but a memory of the past for schools like mine”

— Student Leader from Vienna, Illinois

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landmark Evidence-based Funding (EBF) formula overhauled Illinois' existing K-12 education funding system, replacing an outdated and inequitable structure with a formula that prioritizes the state's least well-funded districts, distributes funds based on a research-based estimate of what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 EBF formula was designed to address long-standing funding inequities in Illinois' K-12 education systems. [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 possible only when the state invests additional amounts through the formula each year.



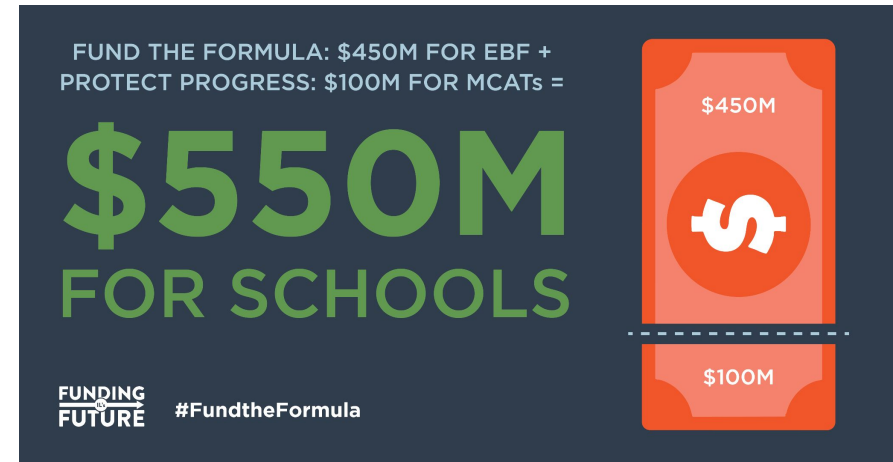
About Mandated Categoricals (MCATs)

Mandated Categoricals (MCATs) are **state grants earmarked for specific programs or student populations**, as required by statute. These funds can only be used for their designated purpose and are essential for covering critical student services **not included in the EBF formula**. MCATs include:

- Illinois Free Lunch & Breakfast Program
- Orphanage Tuition
- Special Education – Orphanage Tuition
- Special Education – Private Tuition
- Transportation – Special Education
- Transportation – Regular/Vocational

Two MCATs must be fully funded each year by law: orphanage tuition and special education orphanage tuition. The remaining programs are **prorated—meaning districts are reimbursed only for a portion of their costs**. In FY26, MCAT appropriations fell short of district claims by more than **\$500 million**, leaving schools to fill the gap.

When MCATs are underfunded, districts must divert EBF dollars to cover legally mandated costs—**diluting the impact of EBF and perpetuating inequity**. Increasing MCAT funding by **\$100 million** in FY27 will help stabilize district budgets, ensure compliance with state mandates, and allow EBF investments to reach classrooms where they're needed most.



Urge Key Decision Makers to Prioritize an investment of \$550M for Schools in FY27



Advocates,

We need your help to ensure the Illinois General Assembly prioritizes an investment of **\$550 million for schools** in the FY27 state budget.

Since its passage in 2017, **the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula has helped Illinois make real progress toward a more equitable school funding system.** Continued investments through EBF have supported academic recovery and moved districts closer to the resources students need.

Now, **the responsibility lies with the budgeteers and Budgeteers, the House and the Senate Education Committees to build on that progress.** As lawmakers finalize FY27 budget decisions, the stakes could not be higher for students, educators, and communities across Illinois. Fully funding our schools requires sustained, deliberate action, and this moment demands leadership.



Since its inception, EBF has reduced the number of **severely underfunded districts**—those below 70% of adequacy—from **459 to just 56**, proving that sustained investment works. Yet Illinois still faces a **\$3 billion funding shortfall**, and **3 in 4 students** continue to attend underfunded districts.



Inflation and rising costs have weakened the impact of recent increases—**what \$350 million covered in 2017 now costs nearly \$470 million today**. To stay on track toward full funding and ensure schools have the resources and stability they need, we must go further.



Adequately funding MCATs—such as transportation, special education, and free and reduced-price meal programs—**ensures districts can meet basic student needs** without pulling dollars away from classrooms.

Advocates across the state are calling for **\$550 million for schools in FY27**—including **\$450 million for EBF and \$100 million for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs)**. Together, these investments strengthen Illinois' commitment to equity and ensure that every student, no matter their ZIP code, background, or income, has access to a high-quality education.

Right now, we need bold action from our leaders to secure the future of Illinois students.

This May, we'll share **weekly social media messages, sample letters, and opportunities to submit testimony** to make your voice heard. Use this toolkit to personalize messages and share why increased investment in school funding matters to you and your community.

Act today and share this toolkit with your network. Together, we can make sure our decision makers ensure the FY27 budget continues Illinois' progress toward fully and equitably funding our public schools.

Governor Pritzker, prioritize \$550M for Schools: Call for \$450M in EBF and \$100M for MCATs for Illinois Schools in FY27

The time to act on behalf of Illinois students is now. We're calling on Governor Pritzker to prioritize an investment of \$550 million for schools in the FY27 budget—including \$450M for the Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula and \$100M for Mandated Categoricals (MCATs).

Since 2017, EBF has transformed the way in which Illinois funds schools, reducing the number of severely underfunded districts from 459 to 56. But rising costs and inflation have weakened the impact of annual increases, leaving three out of four students still in underfunded schools.

An investment of \$550M will keep Illinois on track toward fully and equitably funding our public schools, ensuring that every student—no matter their ZIP code—has access to the high-quality education they deserve.

Join advocates across the state and urge Governor Pritzker to #FundTheFormula and invest \$550M for Illinois schools in FY27.

FUNDING ILLINOIS FUTURE

Contact Information

Prefix (required)


First Name (required)

Last Name (required)

Email (required)

Mobile or Home Phone (required)

Message

 Illinois Governor

Subject: ((Please Tally this Request)) Prioritize \$450M for EBF and \$100M for MCATs

Dear [[Recipient's Title and Name]]:






FY27 Funding IL's Future
Published by HubSpot · December 4, 2025

5 Things to Know About MCATs

- 1 MCATs fund mandated services — schools are legally required to provide them.
- 2 The state currently reimburses less than full cost (as low as \$0.32 for every \$1 spent on meals).
- 3 That creates an estimated \$500M gap statewide.
- 4 When MCATs fall short, districts are forced to dip into Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) dollars meant for student learning.
- 5 Fully funding MCATs strengthens both equity and adequacy.

#FundTheFormula #FundMCATs

5 Things to Know about MCATs

- 1 MCATs fund mandated services 
- 2 The state currently reimburses less than full cost 
- 3 Lack of funding creates an estimated \$500M gap statewide 
- 4 Fully funding MCATs means more money for education 
- 5 Fully funding MCATs strengthens both equity & adequacy 

FUNDING ILLINOIS FUTURE #FundTheFormula #FundMCATs

“

“EBF helps us provide targeted interventions to our most marginalized students like bilingual support, reading, math, and specialized instructional materials to help close the opportunity gap.”

— Educator from DeKalb, Illinois

Advocacy Toolkit

Act today and share this toolkit
with your network.



Together, we can hold legislators accountable to ensure the FY27 budget advances Illinois' progress toward fully and equitably funding our public schools.

01 Supplemental Advocacy Materials

In this toolkit you can find supplemental materials for your conversations with legislators or your network.

02 Send a Letter to Decision Makers

Elevate the need to invest \$550M new dollars for schools in the upcoming school year. Modify the letter to highlight your experience and let key decision makers know why funding is crucial for Illinois' children.

03 Social Media Advocacy

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

04 Learn About Other Stories

Throughout this toolkit you can learn more about the stories of students, educators, and other advocates from across the state.

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“Our school community is strong but we need money to simply operate in this climate where education particularly education for the most vulnerable is under attack. Our kids are coming to us at the high school level at years behind where they need to be. We need more funding to ensure we are meeting their needs.”

— Illinois Education Advocate

01

Supplemental Advocacy Materials

Supplemental Advocacy Materials



EBF ONE-PAGER Use this one-pager in your engagement with legislators to help communicate the need for additional EBF funding [here](#).



LEGISLATOR FUNDING ADEQUACY SHEETS Find your state legislators and view data showing the remaining gaps to full, adequate funding for your state representative and senator to use as a tool for targeted outreach [here](#).



FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS You can use this tool to find out who your Senator and Representative are. Start searching [here](#).

Send a letter to the
Budgeteers & the House and
Senate K-12 Appropriations
Committees!

Send a letter to the Budgeteers, and the Senate and House Appropriations Committees!



As budget discussions begin to wrap up in Springfield, the budgeteers, Senate and House committees will play a key role in shaping the FY27 state budget.

Please take 3–4 minutes to send a letter to key decision makers urging them to prioritize a \$550 million investment in Illinois schools.

[Click here to send a letter to key decision makers here.](#)

01 Access the [letter here](#)

02 Input your name, email, and address

03 In the message box, **we encourage you to tailor your message to include 1–2 sentences on why equitable funding in K–12 education is essential for your school community!**

04 Hit sign up and send!

WHO ARE WE SENDING LETTERS TO?

Meet the ILGA Budgeteers



Rep. Will
Guzzardi (D)



Rep. Kam
Buckner (D)



Leader
Robyn Gabel (D)



Rep. Eva-Dina
Delgado (D)

[Learn more about your Illinois legislators.](#)

WHO ARE WE SENDING LETTERS TO?

Meet the Senate Appropriations – Education

- Chair Michael W. Halpin (D)
- Vice-Chair Graciela Guzmán (D)
- Christopher Belt (D)
- Javier L. Cervantes (D)
- Lakesia Collins (D)
- Paul Faraci (D)
- Emil Jones, III (D)
- Meg Loughran Cappel (D)
- Mark L. Walker (D)
- Minority Spokesperson Chris Balkema (R)
- Terri Bryant (R)
- Chapin Rose (R)
- Jil Tracy (R)
- Sally J. Turner (R)

[Learn more about your Illinois legislators](#)

WHO ARE WE SENDING LETTERS TO?

Meet the House Appropriations – Elementary & Secondary Education Committee

- Chairperson William "Will" Davis (D)
- Vice-Chairperson Aarón M. Ortíz (D)
- Republican Spokesperson Blaine Wilhour (R)
- Member Laura Faver Dias (D)
- Member David Friess (R)
- Member Elizabeth "Lisa" Hernandez (D)
- Member Maura Hirschauer (D)
- Member Martin McLaughlin (R)
- Member Janet Yang Rohr (D)

[Learn more about your Illinois legislators](#)

02

Join Us in Social Media Advocacy

Funding Illinois' Future

#FundTheFormula

How to Post

Please post using **#FundtheFormula** to help keep the momentum going. Join us for a series of ongoing social media actions to show your support and share your stories of the need to prioritize investing in EBF and MCATs with the Illinois General Assembly.

Our efforts will be focused on targeting Budgeteers and members of the House Elementary & Secondary Education Appropriations and Senate Education Committees. **You can find their X (Formerly Twitter) handles [here](#).**

If your legislator **does not have** an X account, tag their appropriate party account: @HouseDemsIL / @ILSenDems / @ILSenateGOP / @ILHouseGOP

STEPS TO SHARE

1. Copy & Paste Text
2. Tag your Legislators handles
3. Download image
4. Publish

OR

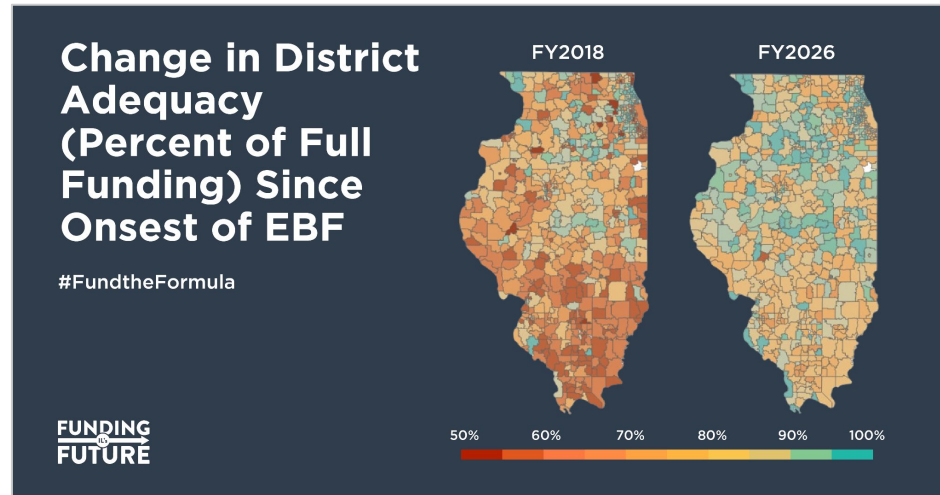
Click to Post on X

Tuesday, May 5

Since 2017, EBF has added \$2.75B to Illinois schools — cutting severely underfunded districts from 1.2M students to just 150K. Let's keep going, @WillGuzzardi @Kam_Buckner @RobynGabel @DelgadoRep #FundTheFormula

1. Copy & Paste Text
2. [Download image](#)
3. Publish

[Or click here to Post](#)

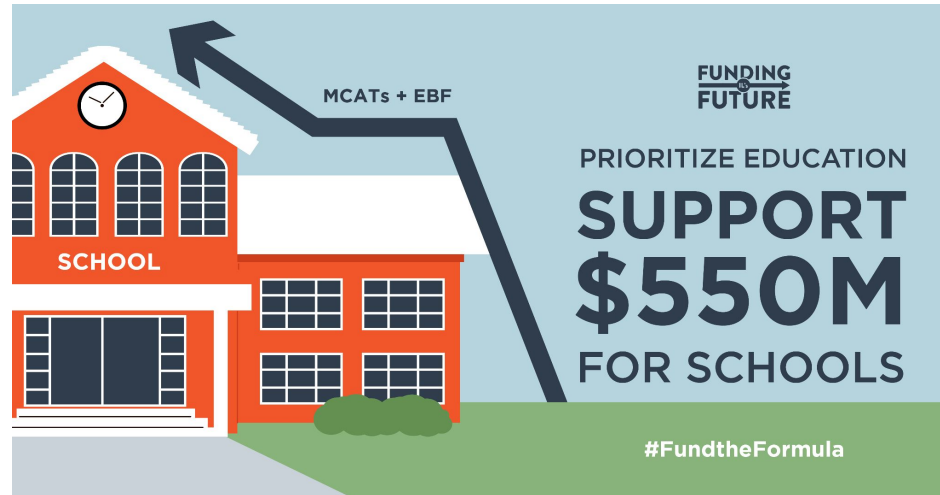


Tuesday, May 12

When MCATs fall short, school leaders have to make difficult decisions – pulling money from key resources like educators and support staff to fill the gap. Invest in MCATs with \$100M in FY27, @SenatorHalpin @senatorgraciela @senatorbelt. #FundTheFormula

1. Copy & Paste Text
2. [Download image](#)
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[Or click here to Post](#)



Tuesday, May 19

EBF + MCATs = equity and stability. Without both, districts struggle to plan, hire, and support students. Let's get it right this year, @laurafaverdias @RepAaronOrtiz @blainewilhour. \$550M for schools in FY27. #FundTheFormula

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[Or click here to Post](#)



Tuesday, May 26

Investments in education matter. Illinois students are counting on us—and on you, @HouseDemsIL @RobynGabel @SenatorHalpin. Let's fund their futures with \$550M for schools in FY27. #FundTheFormula

1. Copy & Paste Text
2. [Download image](#)
3. Publish

[Or click here to Post](#)





THANK YOU

fundingilfuture.org