

Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity – Upskilling Incumbent Early Childhood Educators & Building a Robust Workforce
HB 2878 Senate Amendment #3 (Senator Pacione-Zayas, Representative Katie Stuart)

Illinois must meet the strong demand for highly-qualified early childhood educators by prioritizing innovative higher education pathways and support greater access and completion. **The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity, initially proposed through the Illinois Board of Higher Education strategic planning process, is an agreement between all public universities and community colleges, as well as any private institutions that choose to participate – to cooperate, through regional hubs, in order to improve access to associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees and certificates, Gateways credentials and other licensure endorsements.** Consortium efforts will prioritize the incumbent early childhood workforce, which includes working adults who require programs of study that offer flexibility in times courses are offered, location and format.

Consortium functions will include:

- Course offerings within each regional hub are available to any student enrolled in a member institution if that course is not available at the student’s home institution.
 - Courses taken at any member institution shall be accepted toward the student’s degree at any other member institution.
- Standardized methods for awarding credit for prior learning and awarding college credit for completion a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
- Admissions, financial arrangements registration and advising will be functions of the home institution but honored across the consortium.
- Member institutions working with their regional PK-12 and workforce peers to determine demand throughout the region.
- Development of other shared agreements and terms necessary to implement Consortium functions

In order to ensure the success of the Consortium, HB2878 SA #3 also authorizes further articulation for Associate of Applied Science (AAS) early childhood students.

- A community college student who 1) earns the Gateways Level 4 ECE Credential as part of an AAS in Early Childhood degree, 2) meets all requirements of the AAS degree, and 3) has a GPA of at least 2.0 is eligible for transfer into a public university ECE baccalaureate program.
- Any Illinois community college graduate with an AAS in Early Childhood will be granted Junior-level status in an early childhood baccalaureate program at a public university.

Consortium Goals & Reporting. The Consortium will prioritize higher education pathways for the incumbent ECE workforce. Early childhood workforce data from March 2020 indicates there are:

- **7,670** with an Associate’s degree who would benefit from progressing to baccalaureate degree
- **20,467** with a HS diploma or some college who would benefit from progressing to Associate’s degree

By July 1, 2021 or within 60 days of the enactment of this legislation, the IBHE Strategic Plan Educator Workforce subgroup on the Early Childhood Workforce must set goals for the consortium to reach by September 30, 2024. These targets will be set for the **enrollment, persistence, and completion of members of the incumbent workforce** in associate, bachelor, and master degrees and Gateways Level 2, 3 or 4 credentials, and Professional Educator Licenses.

- If goals cannot be set by the deadline above, then the goal will be that by September 2024, 20% of the incumbent workforce (using the figures above) will be enrolled and persisting toward degree or credential.

The Consortium will report regularly to the General Assembly and Governor on progress.

- Fall and Spring enrollment, retention rates, persistence in relevant programs, including demographic data

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- Completion numbers and rates, employer type, and years worked
- Tuition rates charged and net price paid (shown including and excluding loans) by enrolled members of the incumbent workforce
- Outreach plans to recruit and enroll incumbent workforce members, as well as participation in those outreach efforts
- Student academic and holistic support plans to help the enrolled incumbent workforce persist
- Evidence of engagement and responsiveness to needs of employer partners
- Consortium budget, including the use of federal dollars, and member contributions (financial, physical, or in-kind) toward Consortium

Consortium Advisory Committee. The legislation also establishes a Consortium Advisory Committee, which will meet quarterly and provide guidance on the Consortium operations. The Advisory Committee will be convened by Illinois Board of Higher Education, Community College Board, State Board of Education, Department of Human Services, and Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, and the following members will be appointed:

- Early childhood employers – center- and home-based, nonprofit and for-profit providers – from different regions
- Urban, suburban, and rural school districts
- Two Early childhood advocates with statewide expertise in early childhood workforce issues
- The Chair/Vice-Chair and Minority Spokesperson or designee from the Senate & House Higher Ed Committees
- Representatives from state agencies, including ICCB, IBHE, ISAC, ISBE, GOECD, IDHS, INCCRRA, and DCFS
- Members of unions representing ECE providers and higher education faculty
- Representatives of colleges of education from urban, suburban, and rural universities
- A representative of a private university college of education
- Representatives from urban, suburban, and rural community colleges and the Illinois Community College Trustees Association

Funding. Initial and ongoing success of the consortium institutions in serving the incumbent workforce will require adequate and appropriate investments – to support institutions, and especially to support students. **Through the FY22 General Assembly appropriations process, \$110 million in federal child care stabilization funds were appropriated to ICCB, IBHE, and ISAC for early childhood higher education purposes, including investments to ensure the success of the Consortium, such as:**

- Last dollar student financial aid ensuring zero cost to students pursuing early childhood degrees
- Professional engagement & marketing campaign to support enrollment and receipt of financial aid
- Student supports, such as: completion incentive stipends, student teaching stipends, child care stipends for student parents, and student debt relief
- Stipends for faculty time for participation in consortium planning and implementation
- Support and training for coaches at institutions; cross-institutional navigators to support students
- Financial analysis, led by ICCB, IBHE, and ISAC, in summer of 2021 on allowing community college students to take courses at different community colleges without decreasing local enrollment