

# Tips for Writing and/or Delivering Testimony

at ISBE's Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) Budget Hearings

## General Tips:

1. Oral testimony is being limited to three (3) minutes per person.
2. These notes are meant as a guide. Please be sure to personalize your own testimony with your own perspective.
3. Compose your testimony with an introduction, early childhood needs, the \$75 million increase for the Early Childhood Block Grant and conclusion.
4. Integrate your own voice as much as possible, for variety and authenticity!

## Testimony Structure/Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Early childhood needs and budget ask
3. Other additional recommendations
4. Conclusion

## Introduction:

- *I would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to speak to you today about the FY26 budget.*
- *I'm a (parent, teacher, early childhood provider, etc.). I would like to address supports for our state's youngest learners — and how ISBE can meet their needs.*
- *Early childhood is important to me because \_\_\_\_\_.*

## Early Childhood Needs and Budget Ask:

Talk about immediate needs, specific to the next Illinois state budget (FY 2026):

- *We are appreciative of the State Board's support for early childhood programs over the years. The block grant funds services for children prenatal to age five in schools and community-based programs.*
- *Unfortunately, we're still not close to equitably meeting the needs of kids and families across the state.*
- *We are asking ISBE to include in its FY26 budget proposal, at a minimum, a \$75 million increase for the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) as part of the Governor's Smart Start Illinois plan for FY26.*
- *It's important these new resources both expand and strengthen our programs. ISBE should prioritize the following needs for the \$75 million investment:*
  - *Reducing inequities in salaries experienced by current educators working for programs operated by community-based organizations, and those working with infants and toddlers.*
  - *Expanding more half-day preschool slots into full-day slots and directing a higher percentage of funding to these settings and to 0-3 services. Our preschool learners*

*and their families benefit from a full-day of learning and infants and toddlers in center-based care deserve a wealth of resources and supports.*

- *Ensuring programs have the supports and capacity to meet the diverse learning needs of young children.*
- *Ensuring that existing and future per child amounts are aligned and reflective of the actual cost of programming based on the age of the child, in addition to keeping up with the current cost of living.*

### **Additional Recommendations:**

No need to include all of these points; pick and choose what feels right to you.

- *We need to improve our systems by equitably allocating early childhood funding with an eye toward reaching children in priority populations. Key to this is for spending to be informed by data, and providing transparency and accountability to the public.*
- *We need to continue moving far more resources and attention to early childhood, a system that helps our state's young children to enter school prepared for success.*
- *As we work to respond to the challenges in the early childhood field with the new Illinois Department of Early Childhood, we also need to keep in mind the current state of the system, so children of today are not overlooked during the transition period.*
- *The Governor's Funding Commission report has been and should continue to be the map that will lead us to an improved early care and education system for all.*

### **Conclusion:**

- *The early years of a child's life are incredibly crucial and grounding. It is important that we invest money into programs that will support their optimal growth.*
- *We hope ISBE will act boldly when putting together its FY26 budget request and focus their attention on how we can best help young children's development in the coming years.*
- *Thank you for your consideration.*

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