



Mayoral Transition Memo

Mayor-Elect Johnson has made clear his commitment to ensuring that every student in Chicago is supported in a fully resourced, safe, and healthy learning environment. In so doing, the Johnson administration will need to build on Chicago's strong history of investing in early care and education (ECE) opportunities that begin at birth and are delivered in both school and community-based settings. Key to achieving a unified vision for a successful prenatal-to-five system will be partnership with Chicago's community stakeholders and organizations that advocate for and provide services to thousands of families with young children across the city of Chicago. We urge that Mayor-elect Johnson expand his vision for Chicago's education ecosystem to include early care and education by prioritizing the following:



Priorities for the First 100 Days of the Johnson Administration:

- **Staff key positions** with subject matter experts representing communities facing historical disinvestment, including cabinet-level leadership for early childhood with adequate staff that can address project management, family engagement, and policy and interagency collaboration.
- **Immediately seek input and guidance** from the existing public/private Every Child Ready Chicago Advisory Council and convene a governance commission charged with identifying a new and improved ECE governance structure to prepare for increased funding from the state through Governor Pritzker's Smart Start Illinois plan.
- **Hold focused opportunities to engage ECE stakeholders** in providing input on the 2024 City budget and launch a process to fulfill the mayor's obligation to fight for a sustainable, dedicated city-level revenue source to increase pay and credentialing opportunities for educators and address affordability and accessibility issues for families.
- **Appoint Board of Education members** with early childhood, bilingual and special education expertise and revive activities of the Board of Education Early Childhood Committee.
- **Protect and sustain critical ECE initiatives** that are underway including:
 - The Every Child Ready Chicago Advisory Council (ECRC)
 - The Chicago Early Childhood Integrated Data System (CECIDS)
 - The Chicago Public Schools and Head Start Special Education Inclusion Pilot
 - The Chicago Early Learning Workforce Scholarship

Strengthen the Governance & Infrastructure of Chicago's Mixed Delivery System

- **Establish a strong infrastructure of collaboration** between the Mayor's Office, Chicago Public Schools, provider organizations (including family child care providers) and parents to ensure plans for universal pre-k expansion are transparent and considerate of the implications for all stakeholders involved.
- **Build a strong and sustainable referral system** between CPS and community-based ECE providers (including family child care providers) to fill empty slots, reduce waitlists, and increase parent knowledge of both types of programs to address under-enrollment and address inequities in the City's centralized application process.
- **Invest City funds** in the Chicago Early Childhood Integrated Data System (CECIDS) to ensure this public good is providing real-time, accurate data that is essential to advancing a clear understanding of the City's ECE landscape and equity in accessibility.
- **Launch a comprehensive effort** to build and sustain the ECE workforce, including increasing compensation, expanding opportunities for credential attainment, incentivizing specialized skills and supporting early career educators to remain in the field.

Invest in Supports for those Impacted by Historical, Structural & Institutional Discrimination and Disparities

- **Establish and communicate city-wide the administration's vision** and commitment to the importance of early childhood education for addressing the needs of all children and families, but particularly those who are historically underserved, including English Learners, Diverse Learners and children experiencing homelessness.
- **Increase the City's Corporate Fund investment** in the Chicago Early Learning Workforce Scholarship to address the \$14.9M budget gap and ensure that scholarship dissemination prioritizes addressing chronic shortages in bilingual and special education educators.
- **Dedicate City funding to achieve pay parity** between community-based providers and CPS teachers, support those with specialized skills in bilingual and special education to remain in and enter the workforce, and ensure that everyone working in ECE programs earns a living wage.
- **Take a leadership role** in supporting and expanding the CPS and Head Start Inclusion Pilot that allows children enrolled in community-based programs to receive their special education services in the community-based setting.
- **Identify sustainable city-level funding** for Family Connects Chicago, a universal newborn support model that combats disparities in maternal mortality and morbidity by offering a nurse home visit to every birthing family in Chicago.

This memo was brought to you by:

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