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Stand for Children Hosts Virtual Movie Premiere to Launch Video Series Highlighting Successes of Evidence-Based Funding for Schools

Chicago – With success stories and improved schools hidden in plain sight across the state, Stand for Children Illinois launched its *Evidence-Based Funding Works!* advocacy and storytelling campaign (evidencebasedfundingworks.org), starting with the virtual movie premiere of videos taken from across the state. The premiere highlighted five school districts from far northern Illinois to far Southern Illinois and others in-between, telling their own personal stories of what additional State funding has helped them and putting real faces and stories to the gains being made as a result of the Evidence-Based Funding model.

“School districts are doing heroic work during this uncertain time, using what resources they have to ensure students get the best education under these unprecedented circumstances,” said Mimi Rodman, Executive Director of Stand for Children Illinois. “This pandemic has laid bare the deep funding inequities in Illinois. Thankfully, for the past three years, over \$1 billion in new funding has been invested in Illinois schools. That funding has played a crucial role in schools serving their students during this time of remote learning and provided much-needed budget stability.

“That said, we know the budget picture in our state has changed dramatically due to the impact of COVID-19. Despite that, now is not the time to shrink from the goals set forth in evidence-based funding just a few short years ago. More than ever, Illinois schools need certainty in their budgets during this uncertain time, and Illinois students are worth every penny we invest in them,” she said.

Since evidence-based funding became a reality a few years ago, Stand for Children has known it was making a difference in classrooms across Illinois. What we did not know was the depth and breadth of the impact that new funding has had, so we set out to tell the stories of disparate districts across the state, to put a face on the gains being made across the state. Schools are hiring more teachers, expanding vocational and career technical education classes, and offering more counseling services to their students. They are investing in new reading curriculum, giving back to

property taxpayers, and expanding services for English learners and special needs students. These are all making a direct and positive impact on classroom achievement.

Stand also heard how some districts are still digging out of financial holes that were years in the making due to underfunding. The new evidence-based funding has given them much-needed stability and certainty, allowing them to plan for the future while also catching up on work that was set aside during the leaner years.

“From Zion to Vienna, from Monmouth-Roseville to West Chicago to Carmi-White County, the stories of evidence-based funding’s impact are immense,” said State Representative Will Davis (D - 30th District). “What these video stories tell us is that now is the time to keep the progress going. Illinois must keep the promise of evidence-based funding for all districts across the state. Neglecting to do so would undo the gains since the historic formula was enacted in 2017. Even in unprecedented times like these, a budget reflects a state’s priorities. Illinois needs to continue investing in evidence-based funding to show that education is a top priority.”

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Stand for Children Illinois is non-profit education advocacy organization focused on ensuring all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially those whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability.

See the stories, access additional resources, and learn more about the campaign at evidencebasedfundingworks.org.