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Stand for Children Illinois Celebrates Illinois Budget's Historic Education Investments

Springfield – Stand for Children Illinois applauds the Illinois FY24 education budget, which will provide historic investment in early childhood, a first-ever appropriation for Dual Credit and computer science education, and another \$350 million for the Evidence-Based Funding Formula. In addition, a newly created educator pipeline program will enable the State to address the high rate of teacher vacancies through evidence-based strategies for retention and recruitment, along with several scholarship programs to help diverse teacher candidates earn their licensure. The capital budget also includes facilities funding to support the new requirement that schools offer full-day kindergarten.

“This budget has a lot to celebrate, from a \$250 million investment in the Governor’s ‘Smart Start’ initiative and additional funding for capital expenses for early childhood and full-day kindergarten,” said Jessica Handy, Executive Director of Stand for Children Illinois. “We commend the Governor and legislative leaders for coming together to support historic investment in young learners.”

One of the most important levers to improve literacy outcomes is to invest in early childhood education opportunities for young learners. Stand for Children co-founded the Illinois Early Literacy Coalition in 2021 and has dedicated significant efforts, time, and passion to improving literacy outcomes for Illinois students. According to the Nation’s Report Card, about 40% of Illinois students read below a ‘Basic’ level. SB2243 (Lightford/Mayfield), which passed both chambers, requires the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive literacy plan and related tools to support teachers and school leaders. Coupling this endeavor with historic early childhood investment represents a powerful commitment to emerging readers.

“I’m especially excited to see the \$3 million investment in Dual Credit. Illinois has made great strides in increasing equitable enrollment in Dual Credit courses. But there are barriers that remain, like the shortage of credentialed educators and the cost to students. This funding will break down those barriers and support access. And this investment will pay dividends; students who enroll in Dual Credit programs don’t just earn college credit and save money, but they also make it more likely that students will go to college,” said Aimee Galvin, Government Affairs Director with Stand for Children Illinois.

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Stand for Children Illinois a unique catalyst for education equity and racial justice, to create a brighter future for us all. Learn more about our work at stand.org/illinois.