

the NEWSSTAND

THE OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION FOR PERSISTENT EDUCATION FRIENDS

LITERACY ROUNDUP

Last year, the General Assembly nearly unanimously passed SB 2243 (Lightford/Mayfield), requiring the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to develop a comprehensive literacy plan. Thousands of comments and dozens of feedback sessions later, the agency finalized a plan and adopted it in January 2024.

Stand for Children and the Illinois Early Literacy Coalition, of which we are a founding member, appreciate the attention that went into building an inclusive plan with a strong focus on evidence-based literacy practice that recognizes its complexity. The plan describes practices that are aligned and not aligned with evidence across seven pillars: oracy, phonemic awareness, phonics,

fluency, comprehension, and writing. It also identifies best practices for early screening.

But developing the plan is just one step. SB 2243 prescribes additional supports for ISBE to develop: a template for a district literacy plan, a curricular rubric, guidance on literacy coaching, and a content test for teacher candidates that includes a literacy subscore.

ISBE has also developed a "Getting Started Toolkit" for districts using the plan and has invited stakeholders to fill out a "Literacy Landscape Survey" to help them guide additional supports. In addition, the revised Dyslexia Handbook has just been released.

We are also working this year to enact HB 4902 (Faver Dias/Lightford), which requires the learning partners who contract with ISBE to support the lowest-performing schools in the state to align with the literacy plan. Finally, the Coalition requested a literacy appropriation of \$45 million to support agency capacity and regionalized coaching hubs.



FOR YOUR DISTRICT: FREE LICENSES FOR PERSONALIZED READING PLATFORM

With the tagline "Science of Reading Meets AI," Amira is a personalized reading platform that has a strong evidentiary support behind it. When used for at least 30 minutes per week, students' average a year and a half of reading growth in a year. "Amira" is a digital tutor who offers students a choice of appropriate books, listens to them read,

identifies appropriate micro-interventions, and celebrates their growth. Stand for Children's national office has partnered with Amira to secure some free, 18-month Amira licenses to gift to under-resourced districts. If a school in your district might be a good fit for some free Amira licenses, please reach out or connect the school district leaders

to Jessica Handy at jhandy@stand.org by May 24.



DUAL CREDIT BILL WOULD EXPAND OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS

Dual Credit saw a huge win at the Capitol last month after the Illinois House passed House Bill 5020 (Blair-Sherlock) with a near unanimous vote of 105-1-0. Dual Credit courses allow high school students to get a jump start on their postsecondary and professional careers, but inequitable access to these courses persists in higher need regions of the state. The advancement of this bill brings Illinois one step closer to expanding Dual Credit access by providing multiple avenues for eligibility and better communication with families,

helping more educators become fully qualified Dual Credit instructors, and prioritizing local partnerships.

We are excited to see HB 5020 move forward at the Capitol and look forward to continuing to work to get it across the finish line in the Senate. We are also grateful for every organization, school district, community college, and community leader that collaborated to make this bill as equitable and impactful as possible for students and all the stakeholders involved in making Dual

Credit the invaluable resource it is. You can find more information about the bill by scanning the QR code. We look forward to continuing to advocate for Dual Credit and work to pass HB5020 through the Senate.



THE CHILD TAX CREDIT

The federal Child Tax Credit, offered during the pandemic, was an incredibly effective tool to lift children out of poverty. But the federal government has failed to renew the credit. Many states are taking action to show their support for continuing the credit. The Child Tax Credit is gaining momentum in Illinois as well.

the Child Tax Credit, including strong majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. On a generic ballot, a Democrat would get 2 percentage points more support than a Republican in these swing districts; however, a generic Democrat who supports the Child Tax Credit gets 16 percentage points more support than a generic Republican who opposes it.

voters support a \$300 - \$500 credit more than lower or higher amounts. Though the federal credit was awarded for any child up to age 17, some of the Illinois' proposals have suggested narrowing that to ages 0 - 3 or 0 - 6, providing a more significant credit during the critically-important early childhood years.

A new poll, commissioned by the Economic Security Project and Stand for Children, found that among 600 voters in three "swing" legislative districts, 77% of voters supported

There are multiple options for the structure and cost for a Child Tax Credit. The polling suggests that

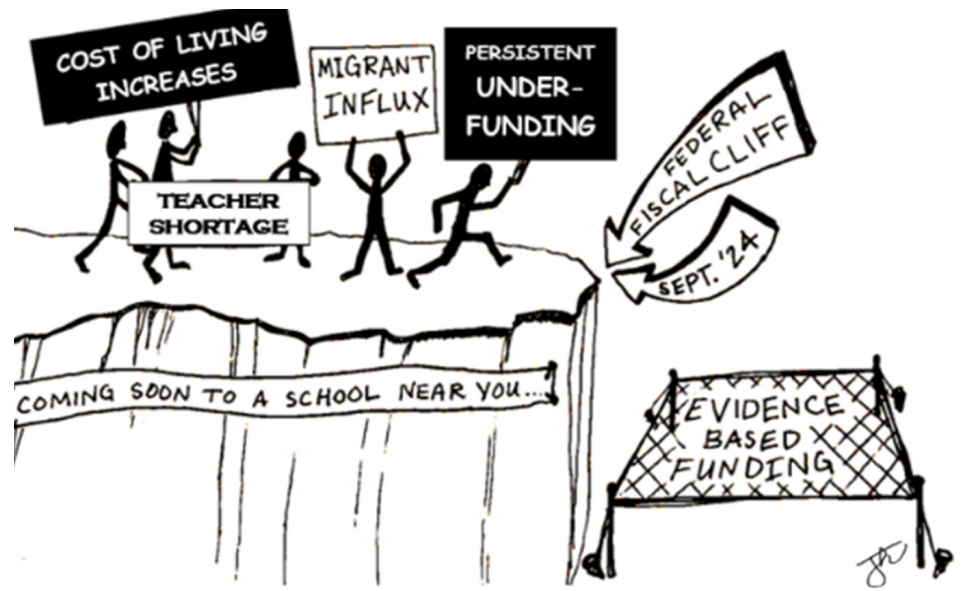
We support including a Child Tax Credit in this year's budget as a priority that will boost the economy and be yet another reason why Illinois is among the best states to raise a family.

FY25 BUDGET PRIORITIES

As we enter the last month of the spring legislative session, budget conversations are starting to pick up—so what are our priorities?

- ▶ **\$550 million for Evidence-Based Funding**
The equity-based formula has a minimum funding goal of a \$350 million increase per year, but we believe \$350M is a floor, not a ceiling. At the current rate of increase, it will likely take two more decades until Illinois schools receive full funding. That means today's preschoolers will graduate before Illinois schools have the funding they need - unless we make a change! Stand is asking for a \$550 million annual increase to get Illinois schools to full funding in half the time.
- ▶ **\$45 million to implement the Comprehensive Literacy Plan**
Now that the State Board of Education (ISBE) has passed the literacy plan, it's time to see it implemented in Illinois school districts. The proposed \$3 million for literacy is a good first step, but \$45 million would allow teachers across the state to have access to regional literacy training. While we are hopeful for \$45 million to make the greatest impact on access to evidence-based literacy instruction, any amount toward the plan's implementation moves Illinois in the right direction.

- ▶ **\$10 million for Career and Technical Education (CTE)**
CTE courses offer students a clear pathway to community college, and the State Board of Education has been actively working to further CTE's impact by making its funding more equitable. To support those efforts, we are requesting \$10 million to invest in students' career pathways.
- ▶ **\$300 million for a Child Tax Credit**
Over 1.4 million children and families would benefit from a \$300 per child Illinois tax credit. We support this proposal because it is a proven way to boost our local economy and lift up families with young children. We want to ensure every child has the resources they need to thrive.
- ▶ **\$8 million for Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) Scholarship Program**
MTI aims to attract and support teachers of color to bring diverse and qualified candidates into Illinois' teacher pipeline. This program helps the state's teacher population better reflect student demographics, and we support a maintained \$8 million allotment to do this.





PICKLEBALL FOR LEGISLATORS

The Springfield Pickleball Club invites you to join us at Iles Park for some friendly games!

- ◆ Wednesdays 8:30–11AM
- ◆ Wednesdays 5–7PM (Pickleball for Beginners)
- ◆ Anytime if you get a group of four. (An instructor can join you if you call)

Paddles and balls will be provided.



MEET THE TEAM



Name:
Louise Dechovitz

Role with Stand:
Literacy Policy Fellow

Family:
My husband and I have two teenage sons and one golden retriever. We adopted our boys from Korea and we hope to visit the country with them one day.

Education:
I have a BA in Slavic Linguistics and Literature from Lawrence University in Appleton, WI. However, my career was in expatriate tax compliance and consulting.

Favorite book:
I'll share two favorites—*All the Light We Cannot See* and *A Gentleman in Moscow*.

Most interesting place you've visited:
I lived for a year in southwestern Siberia teaching English in a teacher training institute. That was definitely very interesting!

Why are you passionate about literacy advocacy?
When my younger son was diagnosed with dyslexia, I needed to understand what exactly that was and how to help him. I reached out to those who could provide support and guidance and soon found that I was able to do the same for others. When I connected with Stand, it became possible to organize and advocate at the State level. It has been an incredible, rewarding experience to meet and work with others in the service of children, and one which I hope to be part of for a very long time.

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ABOUT STAND FOR CHILDREN

Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for educational equity and racial justice to create a brighter future for us all.

STAND'S LEGISLATIVE TEAM

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