



**TESTIMONY BY CHICAGO LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
BEFORE THE ILLINOIS HOUSE SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 3446**

May 16, 2023

Submitted By:

Beatriz Diaz-Pollack, Director of Education Equity

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

100 N. LaSalle St., Suite 600

Chicago, Illinois 60602

Phone (312) 202-3659 | E-mail: bdiaz-pollack@clccrul.org

Mr. Vice Chair Ortiz, Ms. Acting Chair Hernandez and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Illinois House Bill 3446 (HB3446), a bill that would provide stakeholders greater visibility into local school district's Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) spending. My name is Beatriz Diaz-Pollack and I am Director of Education Equity at Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that works to advance racial equity and economic opportunity for all.

The Education Equity practice area focuses on dismantling systemic barriers to high quality educational opportunities for historically marginalized students working through a framework of community-driven advocacy.

In the course of this work, I have the pleasure of working closely with the Partnership for Equity and Education Rights Illinois (PEER IL) coalition, a statewide network of parents, educators, advocates, researchers, and school community members who believe that every student in Illinois, no matter their race, family income or neighborhood, should receive an excellent, fully-funded education. PEER IL is part of a nationwide movement of state-focused, state-driven coalitions fighting for education equity, racially-just public schools, and an end to the ongoing divestment of public education.

As members of this Committee are deeply aware, despite passage of the landmark EBF formula in 2017, which was intended to adequately and equitably fund Illinois K-12 education, inequity and underfunding of local school districts persists throughout the State. A recent analysis conducted by the Education Law Center, national experts and partners in the fight for school funding equity, ranked Illinois 45th out of the 50 states for equitable school funding, calculating that in 2022, 83% of school districts in Illinois, attended by more than 1.7 million students, remain inadequately funded.

These statistics mirror the experiences of parent and community partners active in the PEER IL coalition, who voice concern with the persistent needs in their school communities, who frequently name concerns regarding resource deficits, including insufficient staffing and materials, especially as relates to the education multilingual learners, students with special education needs and delivery of effective social



emotional instruction and support for students struggling to regain their educational footing following the unprecedented disruptions brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic.

These parents and community members seek not only to name the deficits, but to be better informed and meaningfully included as stakeholders and advocates for the educational needs of their children.

HB3446 answers this call, by strengthening existing reporting requirements in the EBF Student Success Act, integrating annual EBF spending plans into school district budgets, and making data regarding annual EBF spending more accessible to parents, educators and community members by including both Base Funding Minimum and EBF expenditures in annual School District Report Cards.

ISBE has already signaled an intent to address EBF spending transparency through exercising its discretion in determining the format, scope, and submission timelines for EBF spending plan. This legislation doesn't contradict or impede the agency's work on this issue, or that of the EBF Professional Review Panel, rather it supports and strengthens it by requiring that spending plan and budget integration in the school code, as well as incorporating this data in the tool, which in our experience speaking with parents, educators and researchers fighting for full and equitable funding of K-12 education, is the one more robustly relied upon, School District Report Cards to make this information accessible to the public.

PEER IL cannot and does not deny that increases in local school district resourcing have occurred following passage of the EBF formula, and most certainly in the last several fiscal years supported by the influx of federal pandemic relief dollars. However, the state also cannot and should not deny that inequities, and regressive reliance on local property dollars to fund our local school districts, persist, and – at the current rate of funding – EBF is decades away from meeting its promise of an adequately funded education for all Illinois' public school students.

HB 3446 will provide powerful tools to support, not only coalitions like ours, but education champions like those of you on this committee, allowing us to more fully understand and engage in decisions being made regarding local school district spending so that together we can continue to advocate for not only more K-12 education dollars, but K-12 education dollars more effectively spent, and in so doing ensure fulfillment of the promise of EBF for all Illinois public school students.

For this reason, I urge you to support the inclusion of the substantive provisions of HB 3446 in the budget implementation bill. Thank you for your time.