

Public Comments April 2, 2021-April 9, 2021

1. Comment #1. (Comments on IBHE strategic plan) Received: April 6, 2021

Brynn Seibert [REDACTED]

To: Bernoteit, Stephanie [REDACTED] Chase, Emily [REDACTED] Ginger Ostro
[REDACTED]

Good evening—

Please see attached comments from SEIU Healthcare Illinois regarding the IBHE strategic plan.

Thanks,

Brynn Seibert

Child Care Division Director, SEIU HCIIMK

[REDACTED]



SEIUHealthcare®
United for Quality Care

2229 South Halsted Street
Chicago IL 60608

April 5, 2021

Illinois Board of Higher
Education Strategic
Plan Advisory
Committee Via email:
strategicplan@ibhe.org

Comments regarding Illinois Board of Higher Education strategic plan

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Illinois Board of Higher Education strategic plan on behalf of the 90,000 members of our union. We are pleased that the strategy draft includes a section on meeting the state's educator workforce needs, with a particular focus on the early childhood workforce and teachers of color. Creating strategies around these jobs in particular is important and appropriate in this moment.

Our union represents about 15,000 workers in childcare and early childhood education throughout the state of Illinois. Members of our union have experienced significant challenges as degree and credential requirements in the field of early childhood have increased over the years. Current early childhood education (ECE) staff who do not have a degree may have much to offer – competencies, experience, and a desire to stay in the field – but find themselves unable to complete the degree they need in order to remain in the field or advance. In particular, enrollment in traditional four-year colleges and universities is often difficult to impossible for current ECE staff given their work schedules. In addition to the barriers faced by working adults generally, the current ECE workforce faces particular barriers as a workforce primarily of women, disproportionately women of color, who are almost without exception employed at modest or low wages.

We recommend allowing community colleges to offer a baccalaureate-level early childhood education program and confer a bachelor of applied science degree in early childhood education and educator license with endorsement in early childhood education. The call for strategies to focus on the early childhood workforce recognizes the need to identify pathways other than availability of baccalaureate degrees through four-year colleges and universities. In our view, the ways currently listed in the strategy draft that the higher education system can address needs of early childhood educators each are useful strategies. We would recommend allowing community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees in early childhood education in addition to these.

Community colleges are likely to be more accessible to the current ECE workforce, and more affordable. They have experience with and structures in place supporting working adults progressing to complete degree programs. Making a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education available through community colleges could reach current ECE staff who simply are not enrolling in degree programs at traditional four-year colleges and universities, or are enrolling but leaving without completing degrees. Given the emphasis in the strategy draft on closing equity gaps, with its call to adapt the higher education system to those often left behind currently, this should be regarded as a complementary strategy.

Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Illinois Board of Higher Education strategic plan.

Brynn Seibert
Vice President for Child Care
SEIU Healthcare Illinois-Indiana