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Response to Governor Pritzker's Early Childhood Investments

On January 21, Governor JB Pritzker announced several new initiatives to grow the early childhood system in Illinois. The Forum appreciates the meaningful steps that Governor Pritzker has laid out, which we believe will lead to significant improvements in the lives of young children and their families throughout the state.

Latino children are less likely to be enrolled in early childhood education (ECE) programs than their non-Latino peers. Yet as the Governor pointed out, 90 percent of a child's brain development occurs before kindergarten. Publicly funded ECE programs can help close these academic achievement gaps. It is critical that we continue to create access to high-quality ECE programs that support short- and long-term development for young Latino children, especially those from low-income families.

The Forum fully supports the following major components of Governor Pritzker's proposal:

- \$18.6 million increase in federal child care funding, which will improve care quality, teacher compensation, and racial diversity
- Five percent increase in childcare provider rates
- Investments to reach pay equity between teachers in community-based and public-school sites

The Forum is also encouraged by Governor Pritzker's announced goal of a universal home-visiting model. Working towards a comprehensive blueprint to serve every at-risk child by 2025 with home-visitation access can help tens of thousands of young Latino children in Illinois develop vocabulary, reading, and social-emotional skills. The state is still feeling the consequences from the \$96 million cut made to the Child Care Assistance Program in the Fiscal Year 2019 budget, and we expect that this remedying effort will go a long way.