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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Decades of research demonstrate that high-quality early care and education programs are effective in supporting the learning and development of young children, increasing their likelihood of success in school and in later life; and

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WHEREAS, Studies similarly reflect the substantial contributions that early childhood services make in strengthening the well-being of communities, the stability of our workforce, and the quality of our economy, as well as public safety and national security; and

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WHEREAS, The quality of early childhood services depends largely upon the quality of their infrastructure, ranging from well-qualified teachers to supportive data systems; and

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WHEREAS, Such infrastructure also includes safe, developmentally appropriate classrooms and related physical space for young children's care and learning; and

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WHEREAS, The availability and quality of early childhood facilities are an equity concern for many underserved populations of Illinois, including communities of color, areas of pronounced socio-economic pressure, and rural regions; and

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1 WHEREAS, The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has
2 stated that high-quality environments not only help keep
3 children safe and healthy but also facilitate concentration,
4 ease of play, and more positive child-teacher and child-child
5 interactions; providing a high-quality environment includes
6 ensuring such conditions as adequate space, ventilation,
7 thermal comfort, and lighting; and

8 WHEREAS, The national Bipartisan Policy Center has
9 reported that investments in early care and learning
10 facilities should be an element of federal, state, and local
11 economic-development strategies; and

12 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois reflected these realities
13 in establishing the Early Childhood Construction Grants (ECCG)
14 initiative in 2009 and growing the grant's resources to \$100
15 million in 2019, with approximately \$40 million of that amount
16 still remaining to be awarded to qualified building-and-repair
17 projects; and

18 WHEREAS, Owing to resource limitations, the number of ECCG
19 grant applications and the needs they represent have vastly
20 outpaced the number of actual grant awards that could be made
21 to early childhood providers over the years; and

22 WHEREAS, In Illinois' mixed-delivery system of early

1 childhood services, community-based providers play an
2 important role by helping relieve capacity pressures on
3 maxed-out school facilities while also meeting the specific
4 needs and choices of many parents in their own localities; and

5 WHEREAS, Community-based service providers typically have
6 far less access to capital, including the technical assistance
7 required to seek building resources, than do schools; and

8 WHEREAS, The vast scope of the State's
9 construction-and-renovation needs is also evidenced by Early
10 Childhood Regional Needs Assessments produced in 2023 by Birth
11 to Five Illinois in which stakeholders from approximately
12 one-fifth of Illinois counties, ranging from Jo Daviess to
13 Kankakee to Pope and beyond, expressly named capital matters
14 among their most pressing concerns; and

15 WHEREAS, School districts participating in the Illinois
16 State Board of Education (ISBE) 2024 Capital Needs Assessment
17 Survey identified the need for building 269 additional
18 school-based preK classrooms statewide; and

19 WHEREAS, ISBE's biennial Capital Needs Assessment Survey
20 captures only a portion of Illinois' early childhood
21 facilities needs, considering that fewer than half of
22 elementary and unit districts took part in the most recent

1 assessment and that the assessment does not extend to
2 community-based service providers; and

3 WHEREAS, A national report from the Reinvestment Fund and
4 National Children's Facilities Network declared that "limited
5 supply of licensable facilities, cramped spaces, and deferred
6 maintenance have been common features of child care
7 infrastructure for decades," adding that their findings
8 "suggest a significant remaining need for funding for
9 facilities infrastructure, from maintaining and repairing
10 facilities, expanding existing programs, to developing new
11 high-quality learning environments; and

12 WHEREAS, In 2019, the Governor appointed a bipartisan
13 Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and
14 Care Funding (Early Childhood Funding Commission) that, after
15 a year of research and expert deliberation, issued
16 recommendations for making the State's system of birth-to-five
17 services "simpler, better, fairer" for children and families;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The Funding Commission's report expressly
20 acknowledged the significance of Illinois' urgent
21 bricks-and-mortar needs, stating that future studies must
22 assess the costs of facility footprint expansion across the
23 mixed delivery system to help adjust projections of future

1 funding needs; and

2 WHEREAS, The Funding Commission recommended substantial
3 increases in birth-to-five programmatic resources that
4 Illinois has begun to pursue through the Governor's multi-year
5 Smart Start Illinois initiative, representing important and
6 desperately needed growth in early childhood program capacity
7 that will understandably increase physical-infrastructure
8 needs even further, over time, as more families are helped to
9 access the services they seek; and

10 WHEREAS, The Commission and the Governor also recommended
11 the creation of a single State agency to streamline, improve,
12 and assume responsibility for the administration of core
13 birth-to-five services that historically have been spread
14 across multiple other departments; and

15 WHEREAS, By an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, the General
16 Assembly accordingly authorized the establishment of the
17 State's new Department of Early Childhood via Public Act
18 103-0594, which also launched a two-year planning process for
19 development of the new agency; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL
21 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that the new Department of
22 Early Childhood and its planning process should prioritize

1 appropriate attention to the facilities needs of our State's
2 mixed-delivery system of early care and education; and be it
3 further

4 RESOLVED, That such prioritization should include
5 development of a biennial measure of physical-infrastructure
6 needs among community-based providers of child care,
7 preschool, and other core early childhood services for
8 children from birth to age five, as well as continue to assess
9 the capital needs of school-based providers of such programs,
10 to better inform state policy decision-making, and reflect the
11 Funding Commission's call for deliberate assessment of
12 facility-expansion costs; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the State should move expeditiously to
14 award its remaining Early Childhood Construction Grant monies
15 to qualified applicants, to assist providers of critical
16 birth-to-five programs in meeting their growing
17 building-and-repair demands; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the State should also move as quickly as
19 feasible to replenish Early Childhood Construction Grant
20 resources to help Illinois achieve the long-term vision of the
21 bipartisan Funding Commission for making services "simpler,
22 better, fairer" for young children, their families, and
23 communities statewide; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
2 delivered to the offices of the Governor, the Illinois
3 Department of Early Childhood, the Illinois State Board of
4 Education, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the
5 Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and the
6 Capital Development Board.