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September 12, 2017

Voices for Illinois Children September Newsletter

From Voices President Tasha Green Cruzat

Illinois Steps Forward with a New School Funding Formula

As the children of Illinois begin a new school year, they and their parents can rest easy knowing that the doors of their school will remain open. The passage of a new school funding formula ends a time of uncertainty and opens the door to a new and exciting possibility: that after decades of a broken system, Illinois will have a school funding system that creates the opportunity for all schoolchildren, regardless of zip code, income, and ethnicity.

Illinois, despite its economic and cultural strength, long defined what it meant to have a broken education system. The state fell short of the national average in terms of state financing of public schools, leaving the responsibility to localities to make up the difference. This led to a system where school districts that sat in high-property wealth areas of the state provided a robust educational experience to its pupils, while lower-income areas were largely left with declining facilities, reduced enrollments, and little prospects for improvement. No state that truly places the education of its children as its highest priority could be proud of the system Illinois produced.

The 2017-2018 academic year puts the state on the path towards a more equitable public education system that will remove the ills of the past and place Illinois at the top of the Midwest where we belong. The new funding formula aims not only to increase the level of state spending on K-12 education, but shifts more of the new money towards the neediest school districts in Illinois. With the new law and the proper funding, we will give students in these districts a better chance at achieving the academic success that is needed in the 21st century economy and give them the hope that long eluded previous generations of students.

Under the new law, each school district receives a unique adequacy target for funding based on a range of factors including its poverty rate, number of special education students, class size, available technology, and 23 other factors. Of newly available education dollars, more will go to those districts furthest away from meeting that target. No longer will a zip code be the main determining influence for attaining a quality education.

No one law can provide a cure-all. The success of the new funding formula is predicated on adding a minimum funding level, set at \$350 million, for each of the

next ten years. It is vital for us to remain vigilant in ensuring that this level is met so that the children of Illinois can receive the quality education that is their right, no matter where they reside.

Voices' Welcomes Two New Board Members

Voices for Illinois Children is privileged to have two new members joining its board.

Wheeler Coleman

Wheeler Coleman is CEO and Executive Partner at EC-United, a boutique IT consulting firm specializing in providing innovative solutions to transform businesses. He is a two-time CIO and former CTO of the nation's 4th largest health insurance company. Wheeler has a reputation for "transforming business and simplifying IT" to meet business needs, driving optimum bottom-line returns, reducing costs, minimizing inefficiencies and improving capabilities, building high-performance teams and integrating emerging technology strategically for long-term growth. Wheeler is an MBA graduate of the University of Notre Dame.

Wheeler has also given back to the community in various ways. To date, he has served as a Southside Little League coach, is a fellow at Leadership Greater Chicago, serves on the Board of Trustees at Northern Illinois University, and offers The Wheeler & Sharon Coleman Family Scholarship at Trinity United Church of Christ.

Curtis J Tarver II

Curtis is an attorney at Saulter Tarver LLP and co-owner of Vice District Brewing Company in Chicago. He began his career as a litigator focused on personal injury defense and commercial litigation matters at a midsize law firm in Chicago. He then shifted to the public sector where he worked as an Assistant to Mayor Richard M. Daley in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. He is also the former Director of Public Affairs for the Independent Police Review Authority. Curtis received his Juris Doctor from the University of Iowa College of Law and his Bachelor of Science with Distinction from Iowa State University.

As always, thank you for your support of Voices for Illinois Children.

Sincerely,

Tasha Green Cruzat



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