



Illinois Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

www.ift-aft.org

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Dear Speaker Welch, President Harmon, Leader Durkin, and Leader McConchie:

On behalf of the 103,000 members of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, I write today asking you to consider the following IFT budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2022. The recent reports that State revenues were \$1.5 billion stronger than forecasted in the current year and are on track to bring in \$842 million more in FY22 are welcome news but the state still faces a projected \$1.3 billion shortfall that needs to be addressed. The better-than-expected revenue projections coupled with federal aid via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) put Illinois on a positive financial trajectory.

Even with this favorable news, the IFT urges you to make structural changes that positively impact the state's finances for the future. The IFT supports Governor Pritzker's proposal to curtail or eliminate numerous corporate tax loopholes. We also encourage the phase out and elimination of the Invest in Kids tax credit. For too long Illinois has relied on a regressive tax structure. This tax credit has a 75 percent utilization rate by millionaires and is another example of misguided tax policy. Further, when the state is struggling to meet its Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) commitment, a tax break for millionaires that essentially funnels public dollars to private schools should not continue.

We call on you to honor the commitment made in 2017 and add at least \$350 million to the EBF formula every year to close education funding disparities which are still among the most inequitable in the nation. One-time federal funds will enable schools to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, but the federal dollars should supplement, not supplant, the additional state EBF dollars needed to bring our schools closer to equity and adequacy.

Earlier this year the Illinois State Board of Education and Governor Pritzker proposed a new \$6.5M for induction and mentoring programs in their proposed budgets. The IFT is glad to see both budget recommendations and would encourage the General Assembly to include the \$6.5M for induction and mentoring in the FY22 state budget. The IFT has a long history of supporting induction and mentoring as one way to support new teachers.

Additionally, we would call on the General Assembly to continue funding the National Board-Certified Teachers program at the \$1.5M level. National Board Certification develops, retains, and recognizes accomplished teachers and generates ongoing improvement of student outcomes.

Illinois public higher education suffered greatly during the recession and budget impasse with an overall loss in state funding since 2000 of over 50 percent. At the same time, tuition for public higher education rose by an average of 35 percent since 2008, and outstanding student debt now exceeds \$1.3 trillion. IFT supports the governor's proposal to increase the Monetary Award Program (MAP) by \$28 million. While increasing MAP will help, it is not enough – we need long-term structural change to fund higher education.

IFT members also provide vital services in many of the state agencies. These agencies are already understaffed, and any budget cuts will further harm their ability to serve the citizens of our state.

Well-funded public schools, colleges and universities, and state services are the foundation of vibrant, safe, and healthy communities. That is why we are urging you to make the structural changes – closing corporate loopholes – that would result in long-term increases to state revenue. One-time federal funds will help the state respond to and emerge from this pandemic. However, additional revenues are needed to balance the state budget and meet the needs of Illinoisans for this year and the future.

Please prioritize public schools, colleges and universities, and state services as you finalize the FY22 state budget.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel J. Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" at the end.

Daniel J. Montgomery
President

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