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June 10, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in strong support of the proposal to provide Child Development Associates (CDAs) six hours of college credit for successfully obtaining their CDA. Doing so would provide them incentive to then obtain their ECE Level 2 Credential, as they would be halfway toward the required 12 hours of credit.

I currently have four employees that obtained their CDA through the program at Eastern Iowa Community College. That institution offers CDA coursework, as well as an associate's degree program. Once a candidate successfully obtains their CDA, they then qualify for 17 hours of college credit toward the associate's degree program. This college (EICC) recognizes the stringent qualifications to become a CDA with at least 120 hours of training in the thirteen functional areas of competency in combination with work hours in an early learning program. Research has shown that the combination of training with on-the-job experience is the most effective way for people to learn.

While I personally feel that six hours of prior learning credit is minimal for the amount of time and effort that it takes for a person to obtain their CDA, it is at least a start toward recognition. We as a field need to incentivize our staffs as much as possible to further their education and move along a career path and credentialing process.

Thank you for your careful consideration,

Cynthia J. Mahr, M. Ed.  
Executive Director



[OUR CORE VALUES](#)

OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COME FIRST. TO DO THIS, WE MUST...

COMMIT TO, EMPOWER, AND SUPPORT OUR STAFF

TAKE JOY AND PRIDE IN OUR WORK

SEEK INNOVATION, COLLABORATION, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

WORK RESPECTFULLY, TRANSPARENTLY, AND WITH INTEGRITY

LISTEN WITH OPEN MINDS AND CARING HEARTS

June 13, 2022

Christi Chadwick  
Early Childhood Consortium Project Director  
Illinois Board of Higher Education  
1 North Old State Capitol Plaza, Suite 333  
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1377

Dear CDA Working Group Members,

On behalf of the dedicated staff of the Carole Robertson Center for Learning and the children that they serve, thank you for considering ways in which institutions of higher learning can integrate the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The CDA is a widely known and highly regarded credential that strengthens the early childhood workforce and demonstrates recipients' knowledge and understanding of child development. Ensuring that the CDA translates into six hours of college-level course credit provides both employers and employees the opportunity to create essential, direct pathways to advance the profession of early childhood education.

Organizations such as the Carole Robertson Center are facing a crisis—the limited pipeline of qualified staff members continues to present challenges, and we must continue to increase opportunities for professional advancement. By honoring the experience of our workforce, we can ensure that we are able to retain and support our current staff, and foster stability within a sector that is still struggling to recover from staffing losses incurred during the pandemic.

By partnering to create meaningful, direct, and accessible pathways to continuing education, institutions of higher learning can help increase our workforce retention, strengthen our workforce's skill set, and ultimately, lead to wage increases for staff. Thank you for your efforts to create a more sustainable early childhood education infrastructure that meaningfully supports Illinois children and their families.

Sincerely,

Bela Moté  
President & CEO

June 13, 2022

Members of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment ahead of the Consortium's review of the CDA working group's recommendations. Start Early (formerly known as the Ounce of Prevention), has championed high quality care and education across Illinois for almost 40 years. Throughout that time, we have remained focused on closing opportunity gaps for young children so they may reach their full potential. As such, Start Early understands the need to support the creation of pathways for our incumbent early childhood workforce to obtain additional credentials and degrees. **Start Early would like to express full support for the CDA working group's recommendations, particularly the recommendation to award 6 hours of college credit to CDA recipients.**

Over the last few years, Illinois has been experiencing a severe workforce shortage in the early care and education field, forcing many center directors to close classrooms and turn away families due to the lack of qualified teachers. Many programs have turned to "grow your own strategies," assisting entry-level staff obtain the necessary credentials to become lead teachers. This is precisely why the CDA is so critical—it serves as a simple entry point into the classroom, allowing centers to continue to serve young children and their families.

The CDA is rather unique, as it is structured so an individual can obtain the credential at their own pace. This is essential for members of the incumbent workforce who have been out of school for some time and would like to ease back into coursework. Many also choose the CDA as an initial pathway due to its low cost, citing concerns about student loan debt. As the field attempts to further develop ECE teachers helping them obtain additional credentials and degrees, it is necessary to build a straightforward pathway to obtaining those degrees. **Start Early believes that awarding 6 hours of college credit for CDA recipients is appropriate and will incentivize them to continue toward a degree.** We fear that anything less than 6 hours of credit will be a missed opportunity and not propel CDA holders toward higher education.

We respectfully ask the Consortium to approve the CDA working group's recommendations and provide a simple and straightforward pathway from a CDA credential to higher education. This recommendation is critical and much needed, as the ECE field struggles to recruit and retain early childhood professionals. By providing college credit hours and creating a pathway for CDA holders, it may allow potential members of the workforce to view early care and education as a long-term career with opportunities to grow.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment and for considering Start Early's request.

Sincerely,

*Diana McClarien*

Diana McClarien  
Vice President  
Early Head Start and Head Start Network

*Mercedes Mondragón*

Mercedes Mondragón  
Policy Manager  
Illinois Policy Team

To: Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (EC-ACE Consortium)

CC: Christi Chadwick, Project Director of EC-ACE Consortium and Marcus Brown, Director for Academic Affairs & Student Success

From: Latino Policy Forum

Re: Public Comment for Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) for credit

Date: 6/13/22

Dear EC-ACE Consortium members,

The Latino Policy Forum (the Forum) would like to thank the EC-ACE Consortium for the opportunity to provide comment today on the important topic of the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) for credit among participating members of the consortium. We are also happy to be represented on the EC-ACE Advisory Board.

The Forum is a statewide non-profit advocacy organization with a mission to build the power, influence, and leadership of the Latino community through collective action to transform public policies in the areas of education, housing, immigration, and community leadership that ensure the well-being of our community and society as a whole. In the area of early childhood education, we aim to promote quality English Learner services across the mixed delivery system. The Forum greatly values the language assets of workforce members and the needs of employers for this critical skillset needed to provide linguistically diverse children and families with high quality early education and care options. This is a critical perspective in the Consortium's efforts to *streamline, coordinate, and improve accessibility of degree completion pathways for incumbent workforce members and employers.*

CDA credential is an important entry point for working adults who want to upskill and enter traditional higher education. This entry point is particularly important for much of the incumbent workforce whose first language is not English. The CDA offers an opportunity to value the linguistic assets of the workforce and target bilingual staff who remain in high demand. The Forum greatly appreciates that CDA credits can be obtained in languages other than English. For many of the incumbent workforce who speak languages other than English, the CDA offers an important springboard for taking coursework that can put them on a path towards an associate degree.

We affirm the importance of approving CDA for credit across consortium members and support of the 6 credit hours with flexibility recommendation on early childhood related coursework. This work should be elevated because it offers foundational level competencies to encourage progress towards Level 2 or AAS. As this foundational work is underway, it is critical to keep in mind that Gateways recently approved an AA-level bilingual/ESL credential. Bilingual incumbent ECE workforce members with a CDA would be prime candidates to target for this credential given the great need in our young learners for staff who are equipped in linguistically and culturally responsive instructional methods. The early care and education workforce (who do not hold a Professional Educator License working outside of school-based settings) have limited to *no access* to coursework designed to increase pedagogy in supporting English learners.

In Illinois, there is rich diversity of families whose children are enrolled in early care and education programs. Teachers need to be highly effective in supporting these children and families, inclusive of those that are English Learners. Nearly one in four Illinois children lives in a household where a language other than English is regularly spoken. To effectively meet children's needs, our early care and education workforce must be well prepared and informed to provide positive learning environments responsive to the language needs of Illinois English Learners. The associate level Gateways ESL & Bilingual Credential provides members of the incumbent

workforce with access to linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy/coursework through Gateways Credentials. With time, this credential could articulate to a bachelor's Bilingual/ESL endorsement.

The Forum appreciates the opportunity to provide public comment for this consortium and we recommend additional consideration to prioritize access for members of the incumbent workforce who speak languages other than English. We appreciate the chance to emphasize the need for accessible coursework and competencies responsive for all ECE professionals that prepare them to teach and care for linguistically diverse children. If you have questions, please e-mail Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro ([Rvnavarro@latinopolicyforum.org](mailto:Rvnavarro@latinopolicyforum.org)).

Sincerely,

Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro, PhD  
Director of Education Policy and Research  
Advisory Member of ECACE Consortium