

The Illinois Association of School Boards shall support modifications to current state laws and funding mechanisms through an equalized reimbursement process that supports students with disabilities in public school settings with an emphasis on the Least Restrictive Environment. The Association recognizes the need for a full continuum of special education placements (including public and private options) to address a diverse range of student needs. State funding mechanisms should distribute funds and reimbursement to districts through a placement neutral process (equalized reimbursement for students regardless of their educational placement in public or private settings).

**Rationale:**

The law that support students with disabilities (IDEA) indicates that state funding processes should not distribute funds based on a type of setting (OSEP/Federal IDEA) and reflects the importance of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) possible for students with disabilities. Illinois remains the only state in the union with a dedicated private tuition reimbursement line item in the state budget that reflects an antiquated, incentivized method of reimbursing school districts for tuition payments to private schools. Specifically, under current Illinois law, when a student is placed in a private school setting, a school district is reimbursed for costs above 2x the district's per capita threshold. A school district who educates students with more extensive needs within a less restrictive environment in a public setting receives reimbursement only when their costs exceed 4x the district's per capita threshold from remaining state funds from room and board allocations, when available. This system for addressing students with more significant needs has been underfunded, underreported, and prorated since the process was developed over 40 years ago. This inequitable reimbursement process remains under mandated categorical payments and falls outside of the Evidence-Based Funding model. There is no current process or funding provisions in the EBFM to address students with more significant needs and associated costs.

The current funding process for tuition reimbursement for students placed in private school settings was developed during an era when districts did not have the resources or capacity to educate students with more significant needs. Over the years, our public school districts and cooperatives have advanced considerably and effectively educate and support students with a wide range of diverse needs within their home school districts and public school settings.. However, the current funding system in Illinois for students with greater needs remains inequitable, continues to encourage private placements, and draws public funds to support private tuitions without addressing a comparable public option of reimbursement.