



Testimony
Illinois State Board of Education
FY 2008 Budget

Supporting **\$4.5 million** to continue implementation of **Grow Your Own Teachers**

I am Anne Hallett, director of Grow Your Own Illinois, a coalition of community organizations committed to improving the quality of education by improving teacher quality and retention. We are very grateful to the State Board of Education for your continuing support of the Grow Your Own teachers' initiative.

As you know, Grow Your Own provides forgivable loans and many supports to enable active parents, community leaders, and paraprofessionals from low-income communities to become high quality teachers. Grow Your Own has four goals:

- create a pipeline of teachers of color
- reduce teacher turnover
- provide teachers for hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-fill positions, and
- increase the cultural competence and community connections of teachers.

Grow Your Own Illinois, with great support from colleagues at ISBE, has organized 10 consortia throughout Illinois—innovative and ground-breaking partnerships of community organizations, 4-year higher education institutions and often community colleges, and school districts. They have each recruited, on average, 40 potential teacher candidates. Of the 10 consortia, 3 have received implementation funds and their GYO candidates are in college. Six-seven others have applied for implementation funds; their candidates began coursework in last spring/summer with planning grants and will continue in January.

We have just collected initial data statewide on the Grow Your Own teacher candidates. We hope you agree that these early numbers are impressive. .

- Approximately **395 candidates** are beginning their teacher preparation this year because of Grow Your Own
- **88% are people of color (51% African American; 37% Hispanic)**
- **83% are women; 14% are men**
- The vast majority, **72%**, will be attending college in addition to **working full time**, many of them as **paraprofessionals in the schools**.
- **68%** are between the ages of 30-50 years old.
- **79%** of the candidates have **some college credits** and **19%** of them are **ready to take the Basic Skills test** to enter the College of Education

We consider this an excellent first-year start toward the goal of 1,000 teachers by 2016.



Tonight, I am here to urge your support for \$ 4.5 million, to continue funding for existing candidates and to support the necessary expansion of Grow Your Own to enable the initiative to meet the legal goal of 1,000 teachers by 2016. This represents a \$1.5 million increase over FY 2007 and will allow:

- continuation funding for the forgivable loans and support services for candidates already in college
- support for at least two new consortia that will be receiving planning grants from ISBE this year
- development of new pipeline cohorts of teacher candidates by several existing consortia.

With your leadership and support, Illinois has created an innovative solution to a national problem of teacher turnover in low-income schools. This initiative is being watched nationally with great interest. We thank you in advance for providing the needed funds to continue implementation.