



**Testimony  
Illinois State Board of Education  
FY 11 Budget Request**

**\$4.5 million for Grow Your Own Teachers**

**Supporting ISBE Goal #2:**

*Every student supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.*

I am Jay Travis, Executive Director of Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and a member of Grow Your Own Illinois. As you know, Grow Your Own is an innovative community-based initiative that is supporting a pipeline of people of color to become highly effective teachers for Illinois' lowest-income schools. GYO candidates are **85% people of color**, compared to only 6% African American and 6.5% Latino teacher graduates of color from all Illinois universities combined in 2008. Illinois has 40% students of color so Grow Your Own is a critically important source of excellent teachers who know the students, their families, their culture and language, and live in the communities where they will teach.

Grow Your Own, an initiative that is **4 years old**, is designed to bring highly talented adults into teaching--adults who will be excellent teachers but who can't otherwise afford college. Over half of the candidates have only been in GYO for **2 years or fewer**. Most have been out of school for ten years or more, are working full time, and have dependent children. The small extra investment in their education on the front end is more than offset by the maturity, competence, and community ties they will bring to the classroom. And they will stay once hired and save their districts the high costs of teacher turnover, estimated at \$50,000 per teacher. Furthermore,

- **43% of GYO candidates are preparing for hard-to-fill teaching positions—** special education and bilingual education.
- **Their average GPA is 3.01**
- **All are taking college-level courses. Only 13%** are expected to still be in developmental courses after December 2009.
- There are **14 graduates** to date. PRA's evaluation shows that **77% of current candidates expect to graduate within the next 4 years.**

As you know, ISBE staff sent out a memo in mid-August that proposed making damaging changes to GYO. After we met with them in September, we were very pleased that they rescinded the memo and we have now established a joint committee to work together to



resolve issues, with the goal of making GYO as effective and efficient as possible—goals we and you share. We want to stay in touch with you, the ISBE board, as the issues are resolved.

We are requesting **\$4.5 million for FY 2011**. As we did last year, we are actively fighting for GYO funds AND a **revenue increase** for Illinois to produce the funds so badly needed for other education programs and essential services. We also want you to consider that, with your investment in Grow Your Own, you have made Illinois a national leader in developing teachers for low-income schools, which as you know is a critical focus for the U. S. Department of Education. Grow Your Own provides a major opportunity for our state to improve our positioning for the **Race to the Top** funds.

A \$4.5 million appropriation for FY 2010 will:

- Support tuition loans, at higher rates for many candidates as they enter 4-year institutions, and cover the necessary supports to ensure candidates' success in college;
- Develop badly needed GYO programs in three new low-income, high-need communities, essential if we are to reach the goal in the law of 1,000 teachers by 2016
- Continue support for the rigorous GYO evaluation to ensure funds are well-spent.

We and the almost 500 GYO candidates in 16 partnerships around the state are counting on your support. Thank you very much.