

Increase early childhood investments by at least 10% in FY23



Governor J.B. Pritzker's bipartisan Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding estimates that the current level of spending is just 14% of the total funding necessary to provide high-quality early childhood education and care. These services are insufficient for families of color accessing programs, the predominantly Black and Latinx workforce, and the rural areas of the state. These inequities have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We, the Village coalition thanks Governor Pritzker for including a 10% increase in funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant (\$54 million) in his proposed FY23 budget. ***We urge the General Assembly to increase funding for ALL key early childhood programs by at least 10% in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23).***

Bills to watch:

HB5005: Chief Sponsor Rep. Lisa Hernandez, Co-Sponsors Rep. LaToya Greenwood, Rep. Will Guzzardi & Rep. Maura Hirschauer

SB3810: Chief Sponsor Sen. Kimberly Lightford, Co-Sponsor Sen. Cristina Pacione-Zayas

\$54.4 million increase for the Early Childhood Block Grant in ISBE

Early childhood educators - particularly those working in community-based settings - remain chronically under-compensated. A 10% increase would allow ISBE to raise salaries for existing educators through cost of living allowances (COLAs) and provide enhanced COLAs for programs operated by community-based organizations. We believe strongly that additional investment should prioritize quality improvements, like full-day preschool opportunities, over ECBG expansion efforts.

\$1.7 million increase for evidence-based home visiting (Parents Too Soon, Healthy Families) in IDHS

These critical "parent coaching" services meant for certain families with infants and toddlers have not received an increased appropriation in well over a decade. Any increase should be used to bolster home visitors' wages towards the state's recommended salary levels. Remaining funds could also be used to expand program access, particularly prenatal services.

\$41.1 million increase for the Child Care Assistance Program in IDHS

Gratefully, the Pritzker administration and the IL General Assembly directed considerable federal COVID-19 relief funds to the child care system over the last two years. Those federal dollars are temporary, unfortunately. Additional state funding should be used to increase funding to providers equitably to better support staff through increased compensation, extend child care assistance to child care staff, and increase funding to support outreach efforts, among other policy initiatives.

\$10.9 million increase for the Early Intervention (EI) program in IDHS

State GRF for the EI program was cut by \$7 million in the FY22 budget on account of a reduced caseload. Referrals into the program have rebounded significantly since the state's COVID-19 vaccine program rollout. Increased funds should be used to support innovative service delivery models, such as those included in the Early Education Act (325 ILCS 21).

We, the Village Coalition is a coalition parents, providers, non-profit organizations, school districts, and many others collaborating to ensure that all Illinois children receive the child care and early education they need. We want adequate, equitable, sustainable, and reliable funding for children's services from birth through age five.

Visit righttocareil.com to learn more.

Contact Lilian Matsuda at lilian.matsuda@actforchildren.org for questions