



February 16, 2023

We, the Village Coalition Responds to Governor JB Pritzker's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024

Governor JB Pritzker demonstrated his strong support for early childhood education and care by announcing the Smart Start Illinois plan during his State of the State and Budget Address February 15. Smart Start Illinois is a multi-year plan designed to increase access to preschool, increase funding for child care provider wages, invest in new and existing child care facilities, and provide more supports to families with limited access to financial resources. We, the Village congratulates Governor Pritzker for this bold plan and commends him for his continued efforts to support Illinois' youngest learners and the workforce who care for them.

Smart Start Illinois would invest an initial \$250 million in early childhood education and care funding in fiscal year 2024, including \$75 million more for the Early Childhood Block Grant, \$130 million for Workforce Compensation Contracts, \$40 million more for Early Intervention, and \$5 million to expand Home Visiting. We, the Village is encouraged by these investments, in particular the investment in Workforce Compensation Contracts. These contracts, aimed at providing more stable and reliable funding to child care providers, are an innovative approach to bring much-needed stability and wage increases to the early childhood workforce. We applaud the Governor for being at the forefront of this important effort.

The early childhood system would be further supported with a proposed investment of \$12 million for scholarships and apprenticeships that would expand the early childhood workforce pipeline. We are pleased the Governor is responding to the significant need for new and expanded early childhood facilities by proposing an \$100 million investment in capital funds for early childhood providers.

Importantly, the Child Care Assistance Program, which was level-funded in the fiscal year 2023 state budget, would receive a \$70 million increase if the Governor's proposed FY24 budget were enacted. This increase would ensure more Illinois families can access child care and support necessary upgrades to information and payment systems.

Smart Start Illinois aims to transform early care and education and is grounded in the recommendations from the Early Childhood Funding Commission. This plan – including additional investments over the next four years – represents a significant step on the path to a fully, adequately, and equitably funded early childhood system and demonstrates the Governor’s commitment to making Illinois the best state in the country for young children. The Governor’s proposed Fiscal Year 24 budget is a strong start and We, the Village looks forward to working with the Illinois General Assembly to bring this historic plan to life.

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We, the Village Coalition is a group of advocates, non-profit organizations, child care providers, school districts, parents and others who have come together to fight for the well-being of Illinois’ youngest children. We seek adequate, equitable, sustainable, reliable funding for children’s services from birth through age five. We want to ensure all children can access quality education and care, as their parents choose. We want resources to be invested in the children and communities that need it most, in order to eliminate racial, socio-economic, and other disparities. We are working together to make sure that ALL families and early childhood providers have the resources they need to help children succeed.