

RIGHT TO CARE!

What Does Smart Start Illinois Mean for Early Childhood Professionals?

Smart Start Illinois represents an historic opportunity for the early childhood care and education (ECEC) workforce in the state. The plan, proposed by Governor Pritzker in February 2023, would **invest an initial \$250 million** in pre-K, child care, early intervention, and home visiting.

The investments include:

- **\$75 million more for the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG)**, creating 5,000 new pre-K slots
- **\$130 million for Child Care Workforce Compensation Contracts** that will give child care providers stability and increase funding for wages
- **\$40 million for Early Intervention (EI) programs** to increase provider reimbursement rates
- **\$5 million for IDHS' Home Visiting Program (HV)** to serve an additional 500-650 families

Governor Pritzker's proposed budget for FY24 includes other important ECEC investments, including \$100 M for new and existing facilities, \$70 M for the Child Care Assistance Program, \$12 M in funding for scholarships for the child care workforce, and \$1.6 M for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

How will Smart Start benefit early childhood professionals?

- Additional funds for ECBG will support center- and school-based programs by increasing access for families and attracting more professionals to the field
- The Workforce Compensation Contracts will bring increased funding, predictability and stability to child care providers. In turn, this will increase wages, improve recruitment and retention, and support quality.
- Increased investments in EI will make it easier to give infants and children with developmental delays the support they need.
- Increased funding for HV will make it easier for professionals to reach and support families in need.

How can early childhood professionals take action?

- Send a letter to your lawmakers urging them to support Smart Start Illinois! Click [here](#).
- Attend the IDHS Child Care Contract Ad-Hoc Committee meetings and provide input. They take place the first Friday of every month from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Click [here](#) for the meeting details.
- Become a #SmartStartNow Champion! Email We, the Village's Organizing Committee Co-Chair, Sinthu Ramalingam at sramalingam@teachplus.org to learn how you can join other advocates in the fight for increased investments for child care!

Follow We, the Village on social media and help us raise awareness online! **#RightToCareLL**

#SmartStartNow   