



## FY 2016 Policy Priorities

Illinois Action for Children will bring focus to a number of policy priorities that advance our mission to organize, develop and support strong families and powerful communities where children matter most. The following are the highlights of Illinois Action for Children's current policy priorities.

### **Maintain Child Care Access and Quality**

Illinois is a national leader in supporting low-income working parents' ability to access quality, affordable child care through the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program. It is critical that the state continues its investment to support children's learning while also supporting their parents' ability to work and reach economic self-sufficiency. Through public awareness and outreach over the past several years, parents are now choosing higher quality, school-readiness child care over home-base programs; especially for infants and toddlers. To reach Illinois goal of 'every child ready for kindergarten', coupled with new federal standards for increased quality and expanded eligibility, the state will need to continue to invest more general revenue funds in order to meet requirements for federal funding as well as grow a well-educated workforce for a strong economy.

#### Request:

- Adequately fund Child Care to maintain access to care while also working to improve the quality of care for all children.

### **Restore Preschool for All Funding**

The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funds the state's Preschool for All program, administered through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). During its funding peak in FY09, the ECBG provided nearly 95,000 3-and 4-year old children a high quality early learning experience. The ECBG also provided more than 20,000 children age birth-to-3 home visiting and parent support programs. Since then, the ECBG has been cut by \$80 million, eliminating more than 20,000 high-quality preschool slots for at-risk 3 and 4 year olds.

#### Request:

- Support ISBE's recommendation to:
  - o Restore \$50 million to ECBG (\$350 million)
  - o Restore \$12 million to Bilingual Education (\$75.7 million)

## **Improve Child Product Safety**

In 1999, Illinois became the first state to pass legislation banning recalled products from child care facilities when it passed the Children's Product Safety Act (CPSA). Since then Illinois has become the recognized leader of children's product safety. However, new products are identified unsafe for children every day-and it is important Illinois keep pace with changing research and national best practice. Illinois Action for Children will work with this General Assembly and the safe-sleep advocacy community to improve the safety of all children by restricting the sale of products deemed unsafe for children.

### Request:

- Ban the sale of sleep products such as crib bumpers and sleep positioners that do not meet basic safety standards.

## **Support the Healthy Eating and Active Living Act (HEAL Act)**

1 in 3 children in Illinois are overweight or obese. This is causing many children and families in our communities to suffer from largely preventable conditions like diabetes, cancer and heart disease which costs Illinoisans more than \$6 billion a year in unnecessary health care costs. There is a strong scientific link to sugary drinks, the largest source of added sugar in American's diets, and obesity. Rethinking what we drink is vital to the health of our children and families, and the future prosperity of our communities.

### Request:

- Pass the HEAL Act. A \$.01 per ounce tax on sugary beverages is estimated to produce over \$600 million in new revenue in the 1<sup>st</sup> year alone.
- Half of the revenue will be used to support the Medicaid budget and half the revenue will be invested in wellness and prevention education programs target communities of high poverty.

## **Fund Basic Services Through Fair and Adequate Revenue**

Illinois tax policy is neither fair to taxpayers nor adequately designed to support fundamental services for Illinois residents now or into the future. Illinois must end the yearly battle for adequate program funding by creating a long-term, sustainable, and fair source of revenue.

### Request:

- Support adequate and sustainable funding to continue to provide adequate levels of service to Illinois' families based on four principles:
  1. No harmful or inequitable cuts to vital programs that are state priorities.
  2. Adequate revenue to fund state priorities.
  3. Fair tax structure.
  4. Fund priorities, keep promises and pay bills on time.