



FY 2017 Policy Priorities

Illinois Action for Children will focus on 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.

FY 2016 State Budget

Request: Pass an adequately funded FY16 budget.

A lack of a state budget for FY 2016 continues to bring pain and uncertainty to the families of Illinois. The expiration of the temporary tax increase has created a \$6 billion budget hole. While 90% of the budget is being implemented through court orders and consent decrees, there remains no budget for \$2 billion in Human Service grant programs like Early Intervention, Teen REACH, and Home Visiting and \$2 billion in higher education costs, including aid for low-income students (MAP grants). The longer the state goes without a budget, the greater the harm will be to families and the social service infrastructure.

Restore Access to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

Request: Restore CCAP eligibility to June 30, 2015 levels.

In 2015, a change in income eligibility reduced families' access to quality child care services. Although CCAP has been partially restored, families that earn between 162% and 185% of federal poverty level and full-time students pursuing bachelor degrees are still not eligible for service. This leaves nearly 15,000 children that would otherwise be enrolled in programs without services.

Improve Child Care Program Quality

Request:

- **Protect and maintain the State's Quality Improvement Infrastructure**
- **Implement new Child Care Development Block Grant standards**

Historically, Illinois has been a national champion in supporting low-income working parents' ability to access quality, affordable child care through the Child Care Assistance Program. CCAP's dual role as a crucial work support and a child development tool means investments have both immediate and long-lasting impacts. With new federal standards (Child Care Developmental Block Grant Reauthorization) for increased quality and expanded eligibility, it is critical that the state invests the necessary general revenue funds to meet these requirements and maximize federal funding.

Restore Early Childhood Block Grant Funding

Request: Increase funding for ECBG by at least \$75 million.

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 FY 2009, nearly 95,000 children ages 3- and 4-year old received a high quality early learning experience through ECBG. Since then, enrollment has dropped by nearly 20,000 children due to a 20% drop in funding. A \$75 million increase would restore program funding to FY09 levels and help meet our federal Preschool Development Grant obligations.

Equitable and Adequate P-12 Funding

Request: Ensure equitable and adequate funding for the whole P-12 system.

Equitable and adequate school funding is a way to help all Illinois children reach their potential to become healthy and productive citizens. Unfortunately, Illinois ranks 49th in equity and 50th in adequacy. Along with increasing funding to the P-12 system, Illinois must modernize its funding formula to adjust to students' unique needs whether they're low income, an English language learner, or a student with special needs. While the Early Childhood Block Grant can change the trajectory of students birth to five, all parts of the P-12 system must be adequately and equitably funded for children to reach their full potential.

Fair and Adequate Revenue for a Sustainable Budget and a Stronger Illinois

Request: Support sufficient and sustainable revenue to continue providing adequate levels of service to Illinois' families.

Illinois' tax policy is both unfair to taxpayers and inadequate to support fundamental services for Illinois residents now or into the future. The current flat income tax does not bring in sufficient revenue to maintain the level of services from year to year, especially as service delivery costs rise with inflation. Illinois must end the yearly battle for adequate program funding by identifying long-term, sustainable, and fair sources of revenue.

Improve the Health and Safety of Illinois' Children

In 1999, Illinois became the first state to pass legislation that banned products that have been recalled from child care facilities when it passed the Children's Product Safety Act (CPSA). Since then, Illinois has become the recognized leader in children's health and safety initiatives. To remain a leader, our policies must continue to reflect advances in product safety and increased understanding of issues affecting infant and child health.