

Support SB1557: Promote Strong, Uniform Early Childhood Program Standards

Senator Lightford - McConaughay

Problem

Strong program standards lead to good outcomes. But the lack of uniform standards surrounding expulsions and suspensions in early childhood settings, as well as racial biases among staff, is having negative effects on Illinois children's learning and success. School expulsion and suspension practices are associated with negative educational, health, and developmental outcomes for all children.

Research shows that expulsion in children's earliest years leads to higher expulsion and suspension rates in later grades. **Further research suggests that expulsion is occurring:**

- **At alarmingly high rates.** A nationwide study indicated that Illinois preschoolers were expelled at a rate three times that of their older peers: 2.7 per 1,000 preschoolers, compared with 0.96 per 1,000 children in K-12, in 2005.
- **At particularly high rates for boys.** According to recent Office for Civil Rights data, while boys made up 54 percent of preschool enrollment, they represented 78 percent of preschoolers receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions.
- **At high rates for minority children.** According to the Office for Civil Rights, while Hispanic and African American boys combined represent 46 percent of all boys in preschool, these children represent two-thirds of preschool boys suspended. And more recent data have shown an increase for black girls, representing 54 percent of female preschool children receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions, but only 20 percent of female preschool enrollment overall.

Solution

The legislation would ensure children remain in the most beneficial settings for their development by:

- Providing protections for children in publicly funded early childhood settings against preventable expulsion and suspension, similar to those of K-12 students;
- Providing early childhood professionals and administrators access to necessary professional development, training, and technical assistance to recognize and address implicit biases, as well as support children with challenging behaviors; and
- Strengthening data collection and dissemination by agencies funding early childhood services, to help inform agencies, lawmakers, and advocates and guide policy-and-practice planning.

Illinois has already improved its expulsion and suspension practices in K-12 through Public Act 99-0456 (SB100, 99th General Assembly). In addition, the federal government has codified new expulsion and suspension policies for Head Start, and encourages states to create a policy on expulsion for the Child Care Assistance Program in its latest reauthorization.

For more information, please contact:

Tim Carpenter, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (312-339-0583)
Samir Tanna, Illinois Action for Children (312.952.0552)
Martin Torres, Latino Policy Forum (630.709.3434)
Jonathan Doster, Ounce of Prevention Fund (708.220.4049)

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VOICES
FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

Supporting Organizations (in development)

Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health

Illinois Head Start Association

Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children

National Association of Social Workers Illinois Chapter

ACLU of Illinois

Heartland Alliance

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Project (IBARJ)

Metropolitan Family Services

Strengthening Chicago's Youth

COFI

Children's Home + Aid

ICOY

Black Child Development Institute- Greater Chicago Affiliate

Advance Illinois

Access Living of Chicago

Legal Council for Health Justice

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