2020 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Illinois Action for Children advocates for policies that advance our mission to organize, develop, and support strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.

Prioritize strategies that attract and retain a diverse, effective early childhood workforce

→ Promote competitive compensation for early childhood workforce.

Across Illinois and the entire country, the most pressing challenges for the early childhood system are those related to the early childhood workforce. The workforce – early care and education providers and teachers, Early Intervention professionals, home visitors, etc. – continues to face inadequate, stagnate compensation, and, in turn, the impacts of low wages on workforce trends, program practices and quality, and communities. We are asking the General Assembly to enact budget increases across early childhood services to begin addressing wage increases.

→ HR 755 (Stuart): We ask the General Assembly to pass HR 755, urging the Illinois Department of Human Services and Illinois State Board of Education to implement policies and strategies to ensure funding is directed toward improving compensation.
→ SB 1316 (Aquino) / HB 2191 (Conroy): We ask the General Assembly to pass legislation to increase Early Intervention provider reimbursement rates by 4% in FY 2021 and in FY 2022, across the board.
→ HB 3984 (Gabel): We ask the General Assembly to pass legislation increasing appropriation levels for IDHS home visiting programs for the first time in over a decade.

→ Allow for alternative, innovative pathways to higher education coursework and degrees.

Current and aspiring early childhood professionals, many of whom are balancing family responsibilities, often face financial, geographic, and cultural barriers that prevent them from accessing traditional degree pathways. IAFC recommends identifying and investing in pathway models that provide support to meet the various needs of adult learners, first generation college students, career changers, and other nontraditional students. For example, authorizing community colleges to confer applied baccalaureate degrees in early childhood could address many barriers and lead to a more diverse pool of early childhood BA holders.

Promote access to child care supports for student parents

HB 5001 (Guzzardi)/SB 3790 (Villanueva)

→ Student parents not only face the same challenges as their peers, such as the rising cost of higher education; they face several additional barriers while balancing academic expectations with work and family responsibilities – including arranging and paying for child care. IAFC is dedicated to supporting student parents by improving access to resources that are critical to their success. IAFC is advocating for MAP-eligible students to receive information on the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and federal dependent care allowance, including where to find eligibility and application information.

Improve coordination and collaboration among child welfare and early childhood systems

SR 1024 (Morrison)

→ Early childhood services and interventions can mitigate the negative impacts of maltreatment on children’s brain development. As such, since 2013, the state’s Early Learning Council has identified children and families involved with the Department of Children and Family Services as a priority population, encouraging communities and programs to increase early childhood services among this population. To really move the needle, IAFC is advocating for the General Assembly to pass SR 1024 to bring key state agencies and stakeholders together to produce comprehensive recommendations aimed at enrolling more DCFS-involved children in high quality early learning opportunities.

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