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This Issue: 2018 Year in Review, Looking Forward to 2019



In this issue of eAdvocate, review an impactful 2018 and look ahead to several of our advocacy goals for 2019. We at Illinois Action for Children want to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season. Let's all rest up so we can hit the ground running with our advocacy efforts in January!

2018: Year in Review



Looking back on 2018, the early learning advocacy community can be proud of many policy victories. Throughout the 2018 legislative session in Springfield, IAFC worked collaboratively with our advocacy partners to pass a handful of bills aimed at improving the early childhood system for children, families, and practitioners. Grassroots advocacy was instrumental in passing legislation, as evidenced by the 1,000 witness slips filed and hundreds of calls made to legislators.

As a result, several bills had between 30 and 70 co-sponsors, all legislation passed unanimously or with veto-proof majority, and each bill was signed into law by the Governor.

Specific legislative accomplishments include:

- **12-Month Eligibility (HB 4965):** This bill was signed into law in August after it passed in the General Assembly with bipartisan support this past spring. The law codifies 12-month eligibility for CCAP families into statute, which provides stability moving forward. IDHS implemented 12-month eligibility for CCAP families approved starting October 1, 2018. Families approved prior to October will move to 12-month eligibility at their next redetermination.
- **ECE Workforce Legislation (SB1829, SB3536):** Both bills passed each chamber unanimously and were signed into law in July. While these are positive steps for helping to address the workforce challenges unique

to early childhood, more work must be done to ensure educational opportunities, professional pathways, and compensation parity for the early childhood workforce.

- **SB1829** provides temporary, alternative qualifications for teachers in Preschool for All (PFA) classrooms, who can now continue to work while pursuing a Professional Educator License (PEL). This will grow the state's pool of PEL-holding teachers and provide an opportunity for existing early childhood professionals to pursue their PEL.
- **SB3536** enables Gateways Level 5 teachers in community-based PFA programs to secure a PEL through the alternative licensure program while staying in their current jobs. The bill would also allow expand the definition of supervisor, so that other managers besides a principal can also supervise alternative licensure candidates working in community-based organizations. The bill also states that teachers seeking their PEL through an alternative licensure program may teach in PFA classrooms.
- **FY19 State Budget:** On June 4, 2018, Governor Rauner signed into law the state budget for FY19, which establishes a spending and revenue blueprint for the period from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. This budget is the result of negotiations between all four caucuses and represents real compromise. It is balanced, spending within our means while implementing some cuts and pension reforms to keep our state on a path toward fiscal stability.
 - The budget restores and increases funding for many of the state's priorities that have been left out or damaged by budget impasse, including funding social services for victims of sexual assault, community mental health, and addiction, as well as higher education.
 - Early childhood education programs were flat-funded, except for a \$50 million increase to the ECBG. The increase is aligned with the state's commitment for the federal preschool development grant. FY19 funding for Early Intervention and Home Visiting programs also remained flat.
 - CCAP funding remained flat, with a \$75 million state funding reduction balanced out by a \$75 million increase in federal funds. This FY19 appropriation covers the cost of 12-month eligibility, a 4.26 percent rate increase for all providers in all regions, and an expanded CCAP caseload.
- **FY19 Federal Budget:** While not all federal funding has been approved yet for FY19, several key early childhood education programs were part of a funding package that was approved by President Trump on September 28, 2018. This includes \$5.3 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), maintaining the significant increase from FY18, and a \$200 million increase for Head Start, including a \$50 million increase for Early Head Start expansion and Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships.



2019: Looking Forward

In January, new legislatures begin their work in Springfield and Washington, as well as a new Governor of Illinois. As you all probably know, last month's midterm elections brought many new faces to the policymaking process. In Washington, there will be at 111 new members of Congress, including three from Illinois, while Springfield will have a new Governor, a new Attorney General, and 38 new legislators. For more information on the election results—and to get to know the new elected officials we will be directing our advocacy efforts towards—check out IAFCs Midterm Election Results Breakdown. With the

legislative session beginning again in January, there are plenty of opportunities for you to take action. Illinois Action for Children's Policy Team will be meeting with each of the new legislators to provide education on early childhood issues in our state, as well as our policy priorities. Let us know if you are interested in meeting your new legislator or having him or her tour your program! Early learning advocates will have a busy 2019 legislative session both in Springfield and Washington. For instance, CCAP is still serving 30,000 fewer children than it was in June 2015, and the state of Illinois did not spend its full FY18 appropriation amount due to low enrollment. Policy changes such as lowering copays and increasing the eligibility threshold and graduated phase-out period, as well as workforce

supports like raising reimbursement rates and simplifying the licensing process—will help increase access to and enrollment in child care throughout the state. Illinois Action for Children is excited to work with dedicated early learning advocates throughout Illinois in 2019 to accomplish these goals.
