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This Issue: Early Childhood Teacher Barriers Removed, Federal Update, More



Happy August, early learning advocates! This issue of eAdvocate will focus on Illinois' efforts to remove barriers facing early childhood teachers, an update on the federal budget, positive changes coming to CCAP, and more.

Governor Signs Law to Help With Illinois Teacher Shortage



On August 7, Governor Pritzker signed SB 1952—this law removes three significant barriers from early childhood teachers receiving teaching degrees and endorsements. It allows teachers to meet the student teaching requirement of their early childhood teacher preparation programs through placement in a setting with children from birth through grade 2, including at a community-based child care centers. The student teaching experience must meet the requirements of—and be approved by—their early childhood teacher preparation program.

Another provision of the law allows for the teacher to be paid and receive credit while student teaching. It also states that each school district may provide a salary to a student teacher employed by the district, and the school district may fix the amount of salary to pay student teachers. The bill also allows teachers with a Professional Educators License working in high-need districts to receive a refund for any costs associated with completing the teacher performance assessment.

Finally, SB1952 also removes all requirements for passing a test of basic skills to enter or complete a teaching program. The test of basic skills is one of the most significant barriers facing potential teaching candidates, particular candidates of color. While this is not a complete solution to the teacher shortage in Illinois, it is a step in the right direction.

Federal Budget Update



register Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and the Trump Administration have reached a bipartisan agreement to extend the debt limit and raise discretionary spending caps. The budget deal increases the overall spending limits for non-defense discretionary funding, avoiding deep funding cuts to programs like Child Care and Head Start. The budget will increase funding levels for fiscal year (FY) 2020 from current levels.

As of now, there is no agreement on what will be included in the budget—only that a deal has been reached. As advocates, we need to make sure the deal translates into increased appropriations for CCDBG, Head Start, and other learning programs.

Specifically, the budget deal permanently ends the threat of sequestration, which means that it prevents devastating funding cuts to non-defense discretionary spending—the budget category that funds CCDBG, Head Start, and other key programs. It also includes an additional \$2.5 billion for the Census. In addition, the deal suspends the debt limit until July 31, 2021, effectively taking that bargaining chip off the table for two years.

To read the detailed agreement, click here (<https://www.speaker.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Bipartisan-Budget-Agreement-July-22-2019.wp.pdf>).

Trump Administration Proposes Cuts to Food Assistance



The Trump Administration introduced a proposed that would make 3.1 million people ineligible to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which serves as the nation's first line of defense against hunger.

The proposed rule will harm working families with children who have net incomes just below the poverty line as well as for families and seniors with a small amount of savings.

The rule also eliminates SNAP's broad-based categorical eligibility option, which allows states to streamline the process for households with slightly higher incomes that still experience financial hardship to participate in SNAP. This option had been in place for more than 20 years, and was most recently upheld in the bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill.

By eliminating the categorical eligibility, the proposed rule will increase the rates of hunger and food insecurity by taking food off of the tables of working individuals and families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. It will also harm the economy, grocery retailers, and agricultural producers by reducing the amount of SNAP dollars available to spur local economic activity.

Illinois Action for Children encourages you to submit comments opposing the rule via the Food Research and Advocacy Center's comment platform (<https://frac.salsalabs.org/comment-on-trump-cat-el-proposed-rule/index.html>). The 60-day public comment period began on July 24.

Proposed Changes to CCAP



The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) introduced proposed changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that would increase access and affordability for Illinois' working families. IAFC supports the proposed improvements and encourages IDHS to consider opportunities to further stabilize CCAP for children, families, and providers.

Under the proposed changes:

- **Income eligibility would increase to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) at initial application, and up to 225 percent of FPL at redetermination.** This means a family of three could earn \$42,660 (\$3,555/month) at their initial application, and earn up to \$48,000 (\$4,000/month) and remain eligible for assistance.
- **Families would have a three-month graduated phase out when their income increases above the proposed exit level.** This means if that family of three's income increases above \$48,000 (but less than \$63,840) by the next redetermination, they would receive 90 days of graduated phase out before losing CCAP.
- **No families would pay more than 9 percent of their income to their co-pay.** This change already took place by emergency rule as of July 1. This represents an average annual savings of more than \$500 for many families previously paying up to 11 percent of their income.
- **Children who turn 13 would continue to receive CCAP through the full eligibility period,** rather than just through the end of that month.

IDHS Launches CCAP Facebook Page



The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) went live with its Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/IllinoisCCAP/>), which will share resources, services, and policy updates provided by IDHS. Please 'like' the page if you have Facebook!

