

(<https://www.actforchildren.org/champion/join-movement/e-advocate>)

This Issue: Advocates, It's Time for Action!

Hello early learning advocates! With the state legislative session in full swing, we will provide a brief overview of IAFCs Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 legislative priorities. We will also discuss the introduction of the Child Care for Working Families Act at the federal level, and our opposition to a proposed rule on SNAP. Also, don't forget to register for the 2019 Spring into Action Conference!

Spring into Action Registration



Join Illinois Action for Children's Policy and Advocacy team for our annual **Spring into Action** (<https://events-actforchildren.force.com/s/lt-event?id=a49110000009zp4QAA#Lodging,%20Etc>) **Conference on April 2-3, 2019**. This conference brings together statewide early care and education providers, educators, parents, and advocates. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in timely policy-oriented workshops, networking, and visits to the state capitol. Register now! (<https://events-actforchildren.force.com/s/lt-event?id=a49110000009zp4QAA#Lodging,%20Etc>)

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What: Spring into Action (<https://events-actforchildren.force.com/s/lt-event?id=a49110000009zp4QAA#Lodging,%20Etc>) Conference

When: April 2-3, 2019

Where: The State House Inn
101 E. Adams Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701

Attendees will hear from expert presenters on a wide range on topic impacting children and families, while receiving resources and learning best-practices to enhance their work. On the second day of the conference, Early Childhood Advocacy Day (<https://www.theounce.org/what-we-do/policy-and-advocacy/illinois-policy-action-center/early-childhood-advocacy-day/>), we will put your activism skills to work! In partnership with the Ounce of Prevention Fund, you will have a chance to learn about key early care and education priorities and educate legislators at the state capitol. As you start planning for Spring into Action 2019, please note there will be limited scholarships available to waive registration costs. (<https://events-actforchildren.force.com/s/lt-event?id=a49110000009zp4QAA#Scholarship>)

IAFC Legislative Priorities

The goal of Illinois Action for Children's advocacy agenda is to promote policies that expand supports, stability, and opportunities for children and families throughout Illinois. With this goal in mind, IAFC's key state policy priorities for FY 2020

(https://go.actforchildren.org/l/471011/2019-03-11/5shn1/471011/50896/FY2020_Policy_Agenda.pdf) include:



- Passing a FY2020 budget that adequately funds crucial early learning programs like the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), the Early Childhood Block Grant, Early Intervention, and IDHS Home Visiting Programs.
- Investing in capital improvements to early childhood facilities to ensure that the physical infrastructure of our state's early learning programs is responsive to the needs of early childhood providers and families.
- Increasing access to CCAP for more Illinois families by advancing policies, such as increasing the income eligibility threshold to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and expanding eligibility categories to respond to the needs of families and communities.
- Implementing a fair and sustainable tax system that adequately funds all of Illinois' priorities, including those impacting children and families.

This legislative session presents a tremendous opportunity to make substantial progress on a host of these issues. It is crucial that we in the early learning advocacy community step up our advocacy efforts and make the case to legislators for why each of these policies is so essential for young children, families, and the early childhood profession throughout Illinois. To brush up on your advocacy skills, check out IAFC's Advocacy Toolkit

(https://go.actforchildren.org/l/471011/2019-03-14/63kn3/471011/51450/IAFC_Advocacy_Toolkit_ENG_2016_50_year_logo.pdf).

Thank you for all that you do for the young children and families throughout your community. Be sure to stay engaged this year so we can continue to advocate for the policies that help advance this field and ultimately lift up and support young children and their families. Also, Check out our FY 2020 policy agenda webinar (<https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/7115016006815437576>) for a full overview of IAFC's policy priorities this year!

Federal Legislation Update – Child Care for Working Families Act



On February 26, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and U.S. Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) re-introduced the Child Care for Working Families Act (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1364/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.1364%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=3>). If passed and signed into law, this legislation would ensure that the cost of child care is capped at 7 percent of income for all families making less than 150 percent of the state median income, which in Illinois equates to 366 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of four (or about \$92,000 annually). Illinois

families making less than \$45,000 per year would not have to pay anything at all for child care. Furthermore, the bill calls for a significant increase in compensation and training for the child care workforce to ensure that all early learning professionals have what they need to thrive and best support the children they are caring for. For a more detailed look at this legislation, take a look at this fact sheet

(<https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CCFWFA%20Fact%20Sheet%20116th%20Congress%20FINAL.pdf>).

As early learning advocates, we strive to ensure that all families get the help they need, children have an equal opportunity to succeed, and teachers are paid what they deserve. This bill is an important step in the right direction, so be sure to urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor H.R.1364! (<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>)

USDA's New Proposed SNAP Rule Would Harm Children



As the nation's largest federal food assistance program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against child food insecurity. Under current law, individuals who are deemed Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) are limited to accessing SNAP for just three months out of every three years unless they can log 20 hours of work per week. These requirements are often untenable for individuals who face structural barriers to employment or sufficient work hours. As a result, states can apply for waivers that exempt areas with high unemployment from enforcing these stringent work requirements.

Currently, every county in Illinois except for one has a waiver exempting this population of SNAP beneficiaries from these strict time limits.

However, a recently-proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) would significantly reduce the circumstances in which states can receive waivers for so-called ABAWDs. As a result, USDA expects over 750,000 people to lose access to SNAP— along with a \$15 billion reduction in federal funding over ten years for food assistance. This proposed rule would not only harm low-income adults facing barriers to employment, but would also have severe consequences for thousands of young children. Low-income, non-custodial parents often use SNAP and other forms of assistance to provide for their children and afford child support payments. Furthermore, many low-income children depend on food, financial assistance, and child care from extended family members and family friends, who do not live with them but use SNAP to supplement their incomes.

If this population loses access to SNAP under the tightened waiver rules, it will undermine their ability to provide support and maintain their caregiving responsibilities. As a result, this proposed rule will almost certainly impact the ability of many young children to access the resources necessary to provide for their most basic needs.

Tell the Trump Administration and the USDA that this proposed rule would harm young children and families in communities throughout Illinois and across the country! We hope you will submit a comment and encourage others in your community to do the same before the April 2 deadline. Sample comment letters can be found here (<http://www.frac.org/timelimitcomments>).

All for Nutrition and Nutrition for All



Creating access to affordable, nutritious food is IAFCs fundraising focus for the month of March. Our All for Nutrition and Nutrition for All campaign focuses on the importance of nutrition, as well as the adversity many children and families in economically-depressed communities face in trying to access healthy food.

IAFCs Healthy Food Program brings nutrition education and access to more than 600 child care providers in Illinois each year, so they can serve healthy and nutritious food to the children in their care. We know that there are still 4,000 more child care providers

that could utilize these services, but the IAFC Healthy Food Program is currently operating at full capacity. We are working to grow this program and meet this critically-important, unmet need for healthy and nutritious food for Illinois' children. To learn more about the Healthy Food Program and our All for Nutrition and Nutrition for All Fundraiser, Click here (<https://www.actforchildren.org/nutrition/>) and follow us on social media throughout March and beyond.

