

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

This Issue: 2020 Census

Check Your Mail for the 2020 Census

Keep an eye out for your 2020 Census mailer and make sure it doesn't accidentally get thrown in the trash! Children under the age of 5 are often missed in the Census count. **In the 2010 Census, 36,000 children went uncounted resulting in a loss of \$340 million** for support of hospitals, child care, schools, and more. The more children that are counted, the more financial support important programs such as the CCAP (Child Care Assistance Program), Head Start, and WIC (special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children) will receive.

Celebrate Census Day with us on April 1, 2020 by entertaining and educating young children about the Census. Do you need some inspiration? Click here! (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/2020census/2020-resources/pre-k.html>) You can also learn more about the Census by visiting our website (<https://www.actforchildren.org/census2020/>).

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It's All About That Vote

Illinois' General Primary Election is coming up quickly on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, and the General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2020. Make sure you are registered to vote, and mark your calendars for the deadlines in our cheat sheet (<https://www.usvotefoundation.org/vote/state-elections/state-election-dates-deadlines.htm?stateName=IL>) below!

Illinois General Primary Voting

March 16, 2020	Absentee ballot request in person deadline
March 17, 2020	Absentee ballot postmarked by this date
March 17, 2020	ELECTION DAY!

Illinois General Primary Voting

March 31, 2020	Absentee ballot post received by this date
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Illinois General Election

October 19 - November 2, 2020	Early voting
October 6, 2020	Voter registration deadline within the offices of the election authority
October 18, 2020	ONLINE voter registration deadline via the State Board of Elections website
October 29, 2020	Absentee ballot request deadline
November 2, 2020	Absentee ballot request in person deadline
November 3, 2020	Absentee ballot postmarked by this date
November 3, 2020	ELECTION DAY!
November 17, 2020	Absentee ballot post received by this date

Register to Vote

Not sure if you're registered to vote? Checking your voter status is easy, just click here (<https://www.nass.org/can-i-vote/voter-registration-status>) and follow the prompts!

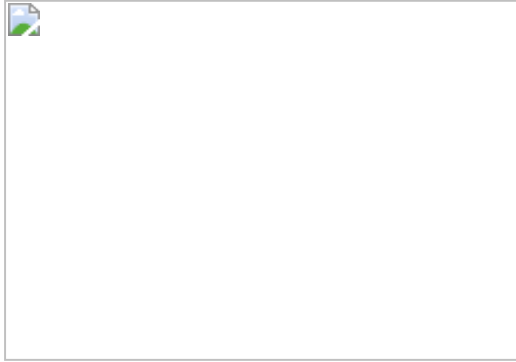
If you're not registered, click here (<https://ova.elections.il.gov/>) and register to vote online!

Statewide Child Care Forums in April



The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will be hosting regional forums across the state for licensed providers (<http://www.actforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Day-Care-Forums-Save-Date-Apr-2020-1.pdf>) between April 20 and April 24, and it is an opportunity to hear about licensing policy changes and updates.

Keep an eye on the DCFS Sunshine website (<https://sunshine.dcfcs.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/Welcome.aspx>) for more details coming soon!



Policymaker Spotlight: State Senator Melinda Bush

Welcome to our Policymaker Spotlight! Each month we will interview a policymaker or advocate, and we will share what we learned about his/her reasons for becoming an early childhood advocate, who inspires them, and what opportunities they see for the future of early childhood education and care in Illinois.

Senator Melinda Bush, 31st District (D), Illinois General Assembly

Why did you become an advocate for early childhood education and care? We know that what happens in those first few years of our lives really determines so much in our adulthood—what happens [in our early years] is so important. That's why I became an advocate.

Who influenced your personal early childhood education and care the most? I had a grandmother and a mother that were at home, and they were able to spend time reading with me and exposing me to different things. [I recognize that] not everyone has a parent who is able to do that for them.

What opportunities for improvement do you see in the way early childhood education and care is supported in Illinois? I'd like to see us get to a point where early childhood care is available everywhere. [In early childhood education and care], children get exposed to books and different types of play where they're able to experiment and learn who they are. I would love for us to be able to get to a place where every public school has a program for any parent and child [who wants it].

What do you think Illinois does well to support early childhood education and care? I think we're doing a better job with funding programs to allow working parents receive financial support [for early childhood education and care]. Their children are not just being babysat [in this care] -- they're learning and taking part in socialization. We are offering more access than before, but we need to continue to expand, [especially] for parents who don't feel they will be able to afford child care. We [also] have a governor who is committed to early childhood. When you have that commitment from your chief executive, that leadership flows down, and we have more interest in early childhood than we ever have before.

What policy or initiative in the last 3 years do you believe has made a significant impact on Early Childhood in Illinois? I think it was important that we expanded the [CCAP] program for working parents that are barely above the poverty level—to ensure they receive financial help so that their children have care.

Who are your Early Childhood policymaker heroes? Organizations that continue to push early childhood issues are Advance Illinois, Stand for Children, and Illinois Action for Children. Illinois Action for Children is a group I enjoy working with because they have a strong commitment to make sure all children can receive care. I'm also really impressed by our governor—he's a huge advocate for early childhood education and care.

We see the statistics. Children that have access [to early childhood education] and are reading by a certain age—that outcome makes their lives so different.

I represent communities that are about 75 percent Latino; they're doing an amazing job in their school district, but they still don't have enough access to early childhood education. [We] have many children who speak mostly Spanish—and something I've been trying to figure out is how we fund an additional preschool [to meet their needs and cultural differences]. I want to expand [access to care] in these communities, but there is a great challenge.
