

eAdvocate Newsletter February 2023



UPLOAD
A PHOTO

By Karen Brown posted 02-26-2023 11:00 PM

Save the Date: 2023 Advocacy Day "Building Tomorrow Together"

Save the date for the Early Child Care Advocacy Day in Springfield.

Join Child Care for All, Raising Illinois, and We, the Village, on Tuesday April 18, 2023, in Springfield to celebrate early childhood. This is your chance to let legislators know how critical child care is and urge them to increase funding for all early childhood programs. For this one-day event, we will gather with providers, families, and advocates across the state for advocacy training and then march together to the capitol to meet with your legislator! Stay tuned for more details and the registration link.

2023 Chicago Municipal Elections: Make a Plan to Vote!

If you live in Chicago, municipal elections are taking place on Tuesday, February 28! This includes the elections for mayor and city council alderperson.

[Click here for voting information](#)

Free Lead in Water Testing for Child Care Providers

LeadCare Illinois empowers child care providers to offer safe drinking water for the children in their care. In Illinois, certain child care facilities are required to test their water for lead and mitigate as needed. LeadCare Illinois offers FREE lead in water testing, training, and support to help child care providers address water safety and meet testing requirements.

[Learn more and request a free test kit](#)

Workforce Scholarship Opportunity

Are you interested in either becoming an Early Childhood Education (ECE) professional or advancing in your career as an ECE professional at no cost? **The Chicago Early Learning Workforce scholarship covers up to 100% of your tuition and up to \$250 per course in books to support your pursuit of a college degree, credential, endorsement, or ECE licensure.**

The Workforce Scholarship application window opened on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. The Workforce Scholarship isn't just for preschool teachers! It's for all ECE professionals and anyone who lives in

Chicago who wants to enter the ECE workforce.

[Learn more and apply](#)

Share Your Story with Child Care Aware

What has Stabilization Grant funding meant for you and your program?

Stabilization Grants have been a lifeline for child care. This important funding has helped providers hire and retain staff, pay bills, improve program quality, and reach more families. But this funding is temporary and will expire later this year.

Child Care Aware is seeking to hear perspectives from more child care providers in every state. Can you submit a short video? Sharing your story can help leaders and policymakers better understand the challenges facing child care and the difference that additional funding can make for programs and families nationwide.

[Listen to what other providers have said.](#)

Governor Pritzker Unveils SMART START IL

February was a big month for early childhood! **On Wednesday, February 15, Governor JB Pritzker unveiled SMART START IL, an historic investment plan that increases funding for workforce compensation, provides stability to early care programs, and increases funding for early childhood programs for years to come.** This plan ensures every child has access to preschool, enhances quality care across the board, and provides more support to families with limited financial resources.

[Read IAFC's Full Response to Governor Pritzker's Budget Address](#)



Early Childhood Education

SMART START ILLINOIS

A multi-year plan to transform early childhood education and care for our youngest Illinoisans

THE PLAN

1. Provide every Illinois child with access to preschool
2. Increase funding to childcare providers to raise wages and quality
3. Invest in new early childhood facilities and expand existing locations
4. Reach more vulnerable families with early support and resources

SMART START INVESTMENTS

Smart Start begins with a **\$250 million** investment in early childhood education and care, including:

- **\$75 million** more for the Early Childhood Block Grant to put Illinois on a path to creating more than 20,000 new Pre-K spots
- **\$130 million** for nation-leading Child Care Workforce Compensation Contracts that will stabilize providers and give childcare workers a raise
- **\$40 million** more for Early Intervention
- **\$5 million** to expand DHS' Home Visiting Program

ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS

- **\$100 million** in capital dollars for early childhood providers to expand existing facilities and build new facilities
- **\$70 million** for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
- **\$12 million** in funding for scholarships and apprenticeships to expand the childcare workforce
- **\$1.6 million** to launch the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a statewide literacy initiative to send free books to children from birth-through age five

Office of the Governor
JB PRITZKER

FY24 Proposed Budget

Smart Start Illinois will begin with a \$250 million investment across early childhood programs in FY24 highlighted by:

- An additional \$75 million towards the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) to create 5,000 new preschool seats, totaling to \$673.1 million in General Revenue Fund (GRF).
- \$130 million to begin funding the first-in-the-nation Child Care Workforce Compensation contracts, which will help stabilize the field by raising child care workers' wages and enhancing equity and quality in programs. With an additional \$70 million in GRF funding for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) totaling \$682.3 million.

- \$40 million for early intervention programs to increase provider reimbursement rates from 5% to 10% and allow thousands of children and families to maintain access to these critical services, totaling \$144.9 million in GRF.
- \$5 million to reach up to 1,500 more families in need of support over the next four years by expanding the Department of Human Services (DHS) Home Visiting Program, totaling \$12.3 million in GRF.

Smart Start is just the beginning. We need the General Assembly to approve the Governor's proposal and say "YES" to Smart Start.

[Contact your state legislator about Smart Start IL](#)

Federal Policy Updates

On Tuesday, February 7, President Biden delivered his State of the Union Address in front of Congress, outlining his priorities for the next two years. His remarks included specific goals for uplifting families, children, and working parents:

"Let's also make sure working parents can afford to raise a family with sick days, paid family and medical leave, and affordable child care that will enable millions more people to go to work."

"Let's also restore the full Child Tax Credit, which gave tens of millions of parents some breathing room and cut child poverty in half, to the lowest level in history."

Advocates are focused on securing the highest possible number for child care and early learning programs in President Biden's FY 2024 budget, **Reps. Bonamici and Jacobs are leading this House Democrats letter to the Administration:** Bonamici, Jacobs Lead Call for Investment in Child Care, Early Childhood Education | Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (house.gov) which is now expected to be released Thursday, March 9. We look forward to staying updated on the work with the Biden Administration to ensure that child care and early learning investments remain a top priority.

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