



ASIAN HUMAN SERVICES

Good morning. My name is Barth Landor, and I am a program director at Asian Human Services. The learning center that I oversee in Chicago's West Ridge neighborhood includes preschool programming funded by the Chicago Public Schools and the State Board of Education. For that reason, I would like to make a brief statement of support for early childhood funding by the city and state.

West Ridge is home to many ethnic groups – immigrants from around the world arrive in our corner of Chicago and begin, slowly, to make a new life for themselves and their children. Plenty of disadvantages face immigrant families trying to thrive in a new country, including a strange language, low incomes and uncertain employment, a foreign culture. It's easy to imagine the effect of these challenges on young immigrant children, whose parents have struggles that may put a great strain on family life.

The daycare program that we offer at Asian Human Services, and which is supported by CPS and ISBE, removes most if not all of these disadvantages. Walk into one of our classrooms one morning and you will find children from families that speak Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, Turkish, and Assyrian – but in our program they will be learning to speak English. Toddlers who have never left their mothers' sides will take the first tentative steps away from family members and towards new friends. Children from poverty-stricken families will get a hot healthy lunch and nutritious snacks. 2- and 3-year olds who may have spent much of their lives in a small apartment will move from one play area to another, putting on costumes, pretending to bake a cake, and then go outside to run around on a playground – and all of this activity will take place under the watchful, nurturing eyes of well-trained teachers.

In our literacy program at Asian Human Services, parents study English as a Second Language and take their children to the local library. Early childhood teachers conduct home visits to make sure that the domestic environment is safe. All of our children's development is assessed regularly, and they are referred for special services if necessary. When our preschool children enter kindergarten, those obstacles that might have prevented them from learning are gone. They enter school as English speakers, healthy and comfortable with their peers, ready to learn and for many of our children, already at the early stages of reading.

Our program serves mostly immigrant children, and of course other schools and programs around the city of Chicago serve other populations. But we all share a common goal, and that is to reach the children and families of our most vulnerable fellow-residents. Early childhood is the ideal time to support our neediest neighbors. I urge you to continue to support funding for early childhood programs in Chicago and Illinois. Thank you.

Baby TALK Budget Hearing Testimony
Joint Budget Hearing December 3, 2012
Ellen Walsh, Baby TALK Professional Association Manager

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the more than 100 Baby TALK programs which are funded by ISBE Prevention Initiative funding. These programs reflect the beautiful diversity of our state, with strong rural programs in southern Illinois, strong community based programs in central Illinois, and strong urban programs providing both home visiting and centered-based services in Chicago.

Baby TALK programs are committed to outreach, working in local partnerships with hospitals, clinics and other community partners to identify and recruit families most in need of intensive services. Many Baby TALK programs conduct newborn encounters with parents and newborns on hospital obstetric units, learning about family needs in a strengths-based approach from the very beginning of a child's life. Baby TALK's research shows that Baby TALK programs identify families at-risk at a higher percentage than Head Start programs and others targeting risk factors, despite the fact that we use a universal approach to families to all families.

Working to establish trusting relationships with families, Baby TALK's approach disarms them so that they don't feel protective and are willing to be served. While Baby TALK programs are given flexibility in implementation to meet their community's needs, their model fidelity is based on their implementation of twelve simple words: Build a System. Screen every family. Identify the needs. Deliver appropriate services.

PI programs promote school readiness at a time in life when brain development is most vulnerable to the impact of interaction. A few dollars spent in the first years of life reap handsome rewards for a child's learning. Baby TALK research indicates that children who have received Baby TALK services score higher on kindergarten entry screenings.

Baby TALK certification training is held in Decatur where Baby TALK began 26 years ago and in Chicago where many programs operate. Professionals from 35 other states are also certified and using this approach in their communities. Baby TALK is an Illinois export.

This year, many Baby TALK programs have struggled because of the 8% ISBE budget cut. These programs are already "lean" and most rely on supplemental local funding. These cuts have resulted in a very real decrease in children and families served as programs throughout the state report needing to cut their list of families served because of the need to eliminate positions. Having learned how to access the families most in need of support, Baby TALK programs agonize to have to wait list babies during the critical early months and years of their lives when our intervention can make the greatest difference.

As Illinois addresses the budget needs of our future, we implore you to protect these most vulnerable children and families. Please consider reinstating funds lost to ISBE PI programs.

Testimony for the Joint Early Childhood Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Hearing
Department of Children and Family Services,
Department of Human Services, and
State Board of Education

Submitted by Laura Rios, Vice President, Child, Youth and Family Services
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago
December 3, 2012

My name is Laura Rios and I am the Vice President of Child, Youth and Family Services for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Catholic Charities is a 95-year-old, faith-based organization that is the social services arm of the Catholic Church in Cook and Lake counties. As such, part of our work includes providing quality, developmentally appropriate care for children aged six weeks to 12 years at nine different Child Development Centers in locations throughout the City of Chicago and suburbs. Additionally, we provide adolescent parents and their children home visiting services to help reduce the negative social, educational, financial, and developmental consequences associated with early parenthood.

Catholic Charities is also a member of the Latino Policy Forum's early childhood education *Acuerdo*, a network of Latino-serving early childhood providers working together to increase access to high-quality, birth-to-five, early learning opportunities that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for Latino children.

On behalf of the 1,572 children and their families whom Catholic Charities served through its Centers in FY12, and the 255 pregnant and parenting youth and their children whom we served in our Home Visiting Programs, we urge the distinguished members of this committee to restore or maintain funding to the Early Childhood Block Grant, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Home-Visiting Program, bilingual education, and Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon programs. More specifically, we recommend the following:

- Restore funding for the **Early Childhood Block Grant** by *at least* \$24.9 million to bring total spending to \$325,123,500. It is vital that the state recommits to high-quality early childhood education, a proven intervention, by taking the fiscal steps necessary to go above and beyond the \$380 million invested in Preschool for All in FY09.
- Restore funding for the **Child Care Assistance Program** by an amount sufficient to scale back the increased parent co-payments initiated in FY13. Changes in the pay scale have driven many families and their children out of licensed child care settings.
- Restore **bilingual education** by *at least* \$7 million to bring total spending to \$70,381,200. This recommendation reflects the restoration proposed by ISBE in its FY13 budget proposal. It is incumbent upon the state to support school districts as they strive to provide high quality supplemental education services to a growing population of English language learners (ELLs) beginning in preschool.
- Maintain funding for the **Healthy Families** and **Parents Too Soon** home visiting programs. These programs were funded at \$10,021,800 and \$6,870,300 respectively in FY13. Failure to maintain the state's investment in these programs would trigger the loss of future funding and require the state to repay the federal government \$23.5 million due to maintenance of effort requirements associated with the Affordable Care Act.

In FY12, Catholic Charities cared for 160 children through the Preschool for All program. The majority of participants were Latino, with 39 of the children considered English language learners. Last year, a vast majority of the children in these programs demonstrated substantial improvements in learning areas: social-emotional development (95%); math development (90%); literacy development (95%); cognitive development (95%); language development (91%); fine motor development (96%); and gross motor development (91%). These milestones translate into critical thinking skills, communication skills, and knowledge, as well as character skills like attentiveness, motivation, self-control, and sociability.

In FY12, Catholic Charities cared for 56 children in a center-based Prevention Initiative program; and through our high school-based/home-visitor program, we cared for 255 teen moms and 218 infants/toddlers. 93% of all children met developmental milestones; 94% of clients delivered full term, healthy weight babies; 89% of enrolled teen parents either graduated or advanced to the next grade at the end of the school year. This compares to the national average of 50% of teen moms who graduate high school (according to a source cited by the Center for Disease Control's website: *Child Trends* 2010). The following story illustrates the impact of Early Childhood Block Grant funds:

C is an 18-year-old who gave birth to her daughter during her sophomore year of high school. C had the support of her mother, and lived with her during this time. C enrolled in Catholic Charities' high school-based/home-visitor Prevention Initiative program when her daughter was eight months old. C utilized the program to learn about her daughter's development, and also used the support and encouragement to enroll her daughter in a Preschool for All program.

Three months later, C's mother lost her housing, and C and her mother were forced to separate. C and her daughter moved in with a friend's family. C was overwhelmed and sad to lose the support of her mother, and would often come to her Prevention Initiative worker to talk. Despite her housing issues, C came to school every day. Her daughter continued in the Preschool for All program. C and her daughter lived with her friend for over a year until C's mother could once again obtain housing.

During her senior year of high school, C and her worker filled out college applications together as C didn't have a computer at home. After graduating, C was accepted into Harold Washington College, where she started this past fall.

In FY12, Catholic Charities cared for 1,000 children through the **Child Care Assistance Program**. These children are living in families teetering on the edge between falling deeper into poverty, and struggling to climb out into self-sufficiency that includes no reliance on public assistance. Because of the cost-effective, interventive nature of the services provided through the Child Care Assistance Program, more than 800 of these families were able to maintain their employment, and stay on the track to self-sufficiency.

Raising childcare co-pays has dramatically, negatively affected every family in the CCAP. Families have seen their payments increase by an average of 52% and these increases have hit families with the lowest income the hardest. Families have been forced to choose between unregulated, substandard care because it is more affordable – or no care – or unemployment. Since July 2012, 45 families have either pulled their children out of one of Catholic Charities childcare sites or are considering doing so as a result of the increased co-payment. The following story demonstrates the impact of this change:

Prior to the start of the school year, four families made the difficult decision to pull their children from one Catholic Charities' childcare site. Each child had already been participating in the center's daytime activities for more than six months.

The children were all progressing in different areas of language development and communication skills. The area of social emotional development demonstrated remarkable growth, with the children adjusting to transitions and building relationships with others. Two children in particular, P and K, who had been with the center longer, were successfully achieving expectations in developmental growth and showing strong progress in nearly every indicator. P and K hear Spanish spoken at home and truly benefitted from the bilingual education provided at the center. They were thriving in the supportive, nurturing environment that focused on both social and educational development.

Unable to afford the increased cost of care, the parents opted to keep their children with available relatives at home. Without the structure and expertise of Catholic Charities early childhood services, P, K, and others like them have lost access to the documented benefits of quality preschool education and the families have lost connection to a life-sustaining community resource.

Through Catholic Charities' early childhood programs, children are better prepared to enter kindergarten, having developed basic reading, writing, and math skills, while their families are either able to maintain their employment or stay in high school and graduate. Analysts of the Chicago Child Parent Center Study estimate that the return on investment is \$7 for every \$1 invested in early childhood education for at-risk children. At age 20, participants were estimated to be more likely to have finished high school and less likely to have been held back, or to have been incarcerated. Investing in early childhood education to increase high school graduation rates also boosts Illinois' economy through increased wage earnings.

The return on investment that the State began realizing as a result of protecting funding for these programs is lost during lean budget years, and the end result will be far more costly in the long run. Thousands of kids will be lost in one way or another – or in many ways.

Once again, we ask that you: Restore funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant by *at least* \$24.9 million to bring total spending to \$325,123,500; Restore bilingual education by at least \$7 million to bring total spending to \$70,381,200; Restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program by an amount sufficient to scale back the increased parent co-payments initiated in FY13; and Maintain funding for the Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon home-visiting programs.

The economic benefits associated with *all* these early childhood programs cannot be underestimated. The Pre-School for All program ensures that at-risk children are ready for what is everyone's best chance in life: an education. The Home-Visiting programs ensure children born to young parents have a fighting chance at a healthier, safer life – and that the parents can change to develop healthier lives as well. The Child Care Assistance Program allows low-income parents to work, maintain normal pattern of consumption, and add revenue to state coffers through employee, sales and individual tax receipts.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Catholic Charities' information and testimony with you. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (312) 655-8570 or lrrios@catholiccharities.net. I am available for further comment or information at any point as this process unfolds.

Testimony of Commissioner Evelyn Diaz
City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services

JOINT EARLY CHILDHOOD BUDGET HEARING
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
DECEMBER 3, 2012

Good Morning, Chairman Chico and members of the panel:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the programs of your agencies and other state departments that offer critical assistance to Illinois children and families. My name is Evelyn Diaz and I am Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services.

Child Care Assistance Program

By providing needs-based childcare subsidies to offset the burden of childcare expenses, Illinois' **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** is one of the most significant programs in the lives of our state's poorer families.

CCAP is *the* program that enables lower-income working parents to keep their jobs or continue their career-oriented training and education. CCAP is the program that lets teen mothers finish high school or achieve a post-secondary credential. And the need for this vital program continues to increase. Two-income Illinois families currently spend over 14% of their total income on child care. Infant care costs a working single mother an average of nearly one-half of what she earns every year. And for families with two children, average child care costs in Illinois even exceed their median annual rent payments.

Each year, our department blends CCAP with federal and City resources to serve 8,500 low-income children and their families in Chicago. Preserving and increasing funding for the Child Care Assistance Program must continue to be a top priority for Illinois in the new state budget.

Autism & Special Needs

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that one out of every 88 American children is now diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. This number is up 78% since 2002. **Autism** affects about 30,000 children in Illinois and experts say that number could be even higher. The Autism Project of Illinois says that if the data included children under five, there would be nearly 9,000 more children in Illinois who have been diagnosed with autism. In February, the City, in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago, will open its second regional autism resource center to provide training and support to families and to professional staff of early childhood programs.

The City of Chicago's Head Start and Early Head Start programs alone served almost 2,000 children ages 0-5 with special needs. Many of these children and families are receiving special needs services through the state's **Early Intervention** and **Special Education** programs. Research shows that investments in early intervention and special education when children are young reduce the need for future services. I am concerned that as we continue to see the number of children with special needs rise each year, the gap in services available to them and their families will continue to grow.

Pre-School for All

I would also like to urge your continued support for **Pre-School For All** under the **Early Childhood Block Grant**. Pre-School For All provides a broad and diverse array of children with quality early childhood education programming that ensures that they are better prepared for school, and these programs additionally strengthen the stability of Chicago's neighborhoods and their attractiveness to families with young children.

Early Learning Challenge Grant

I would like to express our department's commitment to the Illinois **Early Learning Challenge Grant - Race to the Top** initiative. By aligning Head Start and Early Head Start programs throughout the state with other early childhood programs, both state and local governments can maximize the benefits of these federally-funded comprehensive childhood development programs to very low-income children and families. And by coordinating monitoring, training and resource activities we can increase efficiency and provide more quality early learning opportunities for all eligible Illinois families.

In closing, I also want to recognize that many of these early learning, quality child care and childhood development programs have shown an added significant public benefit. They have made it possible to identify and respond to an individual child's latent or manifest disabilities and risk factors early on, lessening the need for later, more costly services and preventing more serious interventions, and enabling all children to benefit from an inclusionary environment.

We must continue to acknowledge the enormous value of all of these programs and fund them accordingly, to ensure a stronger economic future for our state and to allow every Illinois child to fulfill their potential to succeed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on behalf of many of Chicago's most vulnerable children and families and for your ongoing support and advocacy for increased resources for child care and early childhood programs.



children's home + aid

www.childrenshomeandaid.org

Early Childhood: Critical Investments in Any Fiscal Climate

Testimony before the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing

Submitted by Michael Shaver on behalf of Children's Home + Aid

December 3, 2012

Since 1883, Children's Home + Aid has been providing help, hope and opportunity to children and families in need throughout Illinois. Each year, Children's Home + Aid serves nearly 40,000 children and families by helping them overcome obstacles posed by poverty, abuse and neglect. Through a comprehensive array of services, we partner with the state of Illinois to reach a diverse population with programming designed to provide help, hope and opportunity.

We appreciate this time to share our testimony at today's Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing. Early childhood services represents a major focus for our organization. Annually, we serve about 1,000 children from birth to five at several Child + Family Centers throughout the state providing high quality center-based and home-based early learning services. Children's Home + Aid also plays a major role in supporting access to affordable, high quality care by aiding approximately 23,000 parents each year through our Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) activities.

Children's Home + Aid is proud to partner with each of the Illinois agencies represented today at this joint hearing. I hope to demonstrate today how our partnership with the state is not only producing results which can alter the life trajectories of children for the better, but that our work makes the most out of this public investment by reducing costs and creating value for Illinois tax payers in the future, making early childhood the right investment in any fiscal climate. The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) support this work in critical ways, and we are encouraged to see leadership at the state level acknowledging the importance of coordinated, collaborative efforts across state agencies to ensure our work succeeds. In particular, I want to highlight the innovative work being undertaken at the agencies represented here today and the importance of ensuring access to a high quality early learning system as a means of supporting this innovation.

Illinois is widely recognized as a national leader in providing access to high quality early learning services for low-income children and families. In FY09, at the peak of this investment, an estimated 95,000 three- and four-year olds accessed state-funded preschool, and tens of thousands of infants and toddlers received vital developmental services through the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG). ISBE's efforts to maintain and grow funding for early childhood programs has played a significant role in our national profile, and their work on behalf of children and families is greatly appreciated. Despite these remarkable early gains, the ECBG has sustained \$80 million in cuts since FY09, reducing access to early learning for tens of thousands of young children. This represents a major retreat for a state where, according to the latest census data, 40 percent of children under the age of 6 are low-income, living at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

Even with the enormous budget pressures facing Illinois lawmakers, scaling back our investment in early childhood services poses an even greater challenge than we face now – where the public cost of scaling back access to pre-school will be higher and the economic competitiveness of Illinois' workforce compromised.

The research documenting this reality is clear. Beyond the already well-known arguments advanced by the University of Chicago's James Heckman about the return on investment for early learning (www.heckmanequation.org) is research specific to Illinois which makes the case for increased investment in early childhood programming. A 2012 evaluation of Preschool for All in Illinois found significant improvements in school-readiness¹, putting young children on firmer ground to excel and graduate from high school on time. Moreover, this investment pays off for the public as a whole. A 2011 report (*Cost Savings: Analysis of School Readiness in Illinois*) found that Illinois' preschool investment has resulted in an estimated \$353 million to \$530 million annually in combined cost savings and additional revenue to the state.²

Given what we know about the power of this investment, the decisions made during the budget appropriation process in May would seem to make little fiscal sense. Despite recommendations from ISBE and the Governor's Office to restore \$20 million of the previous year's cuts, the General Assembly cut the Early Childhood Block Grant an additional \$25 million. The findings from the 2011 report highlight that the funding cuts enacted by the General Assembly will not save the state money. Rather, the cuts increase costs elsewhere in the state's budget including preventable special education services, grade retention, and teacher turnover.

Restoring the \$25 million cut made to the FY13 Early Childhood Block Grant budget represents a critical initial step in correcting a course which threatens to burden Illinois tax payers with millions in additional, preventable costs and undermining the state's efforts to build the competitive workforce needed for our economic future.

It's important to emphasize that these investments do not exist in a vacuum. By bringing together the work represented by ISBE, DHS and DCFS in today's hearing, there is a clear understanding that the decisions made regarding cuts to an appropriation line in one agency have larger implications for the system as a whole. Similarly, restoring the \$25 million dollar cut made in the ECBG can represent important leverage across a wider system. I'd like to share just a couple of relevant examples.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has consistently sought to use Illinois' status as a national leader in early learning to support an especially vulnerable population: children at risk of entering or placed in foster care. Initiatives like Strengthening Families and Differential Response have relied heavily on the state's investment in early learning to build a prevention strategy that has proven extremely effective. Illinois has the third lowest rate of children entering foster care in the nation. According to national data, Illinois' out of home removal rate is 1.5 removals for every 1,000 children in the population compared to the national median which is 3.5 removals for every 1,000 children.³ In addition to the effective work undertaken by DCFS in serving at-risk children and families, success at maintaining children in their homes is heavily dependent on the broader early childhood system which plays a vital role in supporting this work through prevention. Eroding this investment, over the longer term, means very real risks to maintaining at-risk children safely in their homes.

Additionally, DCFS continues to position itself as a leader nationally by advancing innovative practice for the very young. Recognizing that children age five and under represent 57 percent of the children placed into care each year, DCFS is pursuing an innovative practice change funded using a Title IV-E waiver which will rigorously test the effectiveness of providing intensive services for families entering care with children under three. Growing research suggests targeting this population represents an important leverage for

¹ "Illinois Preschool for All (PFA) Program Evaluation" (Erickson Institute, SRI International, and Illinois State Board of Education, March 2012).

² "Cost Savings Analysis of School Readiness in Illinois," report prepared for Illinois Action for Children, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and Voices for Illinois Children (Wilder Research, 2011).

³ Data Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb Data current as of July 2012

reducing time in care and the likelihood for increasing public costs over time. Absent supports for an effective early learning system, the promise of this strategy is in jeopardy.

DCFS has also made significant strides in ensuring that all young children entering care are provided with developmental screens and are referred for appropriate services to ensure developmental progress for the most at-risk children. If the early childhood services funded by ISBE and DHS continue to be scaled back, the supports needed for this population become increasingly expensive.

DHS is faced with a similar challenge. Under the leadership the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, Illinois has expanded the provision of evidence-based home visiting services in six Illinois communities through the federally funded Maternal, Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. Funded through the Affordable Care Act, there is a clear recognition that investments in expanded home visitation services can reduce public spending on preventable social problems over time. Unfortunately, the real power of this investment is compromised by cuts to the Early Childhood Block Grant. The ECBG funds services that, when coupled with home visiting, offer enormous returns on the public dollar.

As these examples illustrate, the idea of investing during a period of acute fiscal constraint may seem improbable, but the nature of these investments suggest that they offer solutions we can ill-afford to be without as we navigate the choppy fiscal waters in our future.

In conclusion, let me again acknowledge that the challenges we now face with respect to Illinois' budget are profound, and the choices we make will not be easy choices. But there is clear evidence that walking away from our investment in the very young leads us down a path that only makes our current challenges worse over the long-term. The priorities Illinois sets for the FY14 budget will determine how well our children are to succeed in school and life, and their success will determine the state's ability to grow and thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

Children's Home + Aid has joined with others in consistently calling for a balanced approach to the addressing state's budget crisis. This balanced approach includes securing adequate and sustainable resources, reforming the state's pension system, and ensuring resources are targeted effectively. We see the investment in early childhood as perhaps the most important step we can take with respect to ensuring state resources are targeted effectively.

For more information, contact Michael Shaver, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at mshaver@childrenshomeandaid.org or at 312-424-6821.



CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS

413 West Monroe Street • Springfield, Illinois 62704 • Phone 217-528-4409 • FAX 217-528-6498

CHICAGO MAILING ADDRESS: 155 N. Harbor Drive, #607 • Chicago, Illinois 60601 • Phone: 312-819-1950 • FAX 312-819-1951

TESTIMONY JOINT EARLY CHILDHOOD BUDGET HEARING

About the Child Care Association of Illinois: *The CCAI is an organization of 60 voluntary agencies that provide children's services throughout Illinois including Early Childhood Programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, as well as child mental health services, child welfare, delinquency prevention, community based youth services, residential treatment, and private special education.*

The Child Care Association of Illinois supports essential funding for the range of Early Childhood Education services, Early Intervention, Child Welfare, and Children's Mental Health Services.

In the last fiscal year, Early Childhood Services lost almost \$25 million in funding resulting in loss of child care availability. Early Childhood Services are an integral part of the spectrum of human services and education programs throughout the state, playing an essential role in the successful implementation of other programs.

Early Childhood within the Larger Education System: High quality early childhood programming provides children with academic and social school readiness skills. Children enter kindergarten better prepared and with more confidence. Early Childhood settings provide the opportunity for early identification of learning or other special needs to allow for early intervention.

Early Childhood and Economic Success of Families: Families on TANF and low-income working families depend on child care services and related subsidies to continue working or fulfill TANF requirements. Without subsidized child care services, families must often choose between keeping their jobs or having substandard care for their young children.

Early Childhood and Child Welfare: Early Childhood programming can provide an essential support for struggling families, helping to prevent child abuse and neglect and needed structure for at risk children. In addition, working foster parents depend on day care services to care for young children while maintaining employment.

Early Childhood and Juvenile Justice: Quality Early Childhood programming has been demonstrated to reduce the risk for delinquency by increasing school readiness and positive connections to school.

Finally, early intervention for children with special needs or mental health issues also promote better outcomes in education and child welfare while decreasing the likelihood that children will later turn towards delinquency as an expression of unmet needs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katherine Buchanan
Associate Director
847-492-8740

... dedicated to providing leadership for the improvement of children's services in Illinois

MARGARET M. BERGLIND
President/CEO

The Parenting Education Program: An evidence-based positive parenting program for Illinois communities

Each year, more than 3 million children are reported as abused or neglected in the US. Nationally, an estimated 905,000 children were the victims of maltreatment, and at least 1,530 children died of abuse and neglect in 2006. Additionally, children under three years of age had the highest rates of victimization; over half of the victims were seven years of age or younger. Recent research underscores the need for more evidence-based programs, and to understand the efficacy of existing community-based programs currently being offered to the public. Although several parenting programs developed within university settings have been evaluated and disseminated, few programs developed within community organizations have been able to conduct rigorous evaluations to determine their impacts. These programs have often already dealt with many of the challenges to implementation and entrée that university-based programs face when translated to the community, and deserve more evaluation resources and attention. With funding from the Chicago Community Trust, the Irving Harris Foundation, and Hedge Funds Care, the Community Counseling Centers of Chicago partnered with the University of Puerto Rico School of Public Health to conduct a rigorous effectiveness study of their community-based Parenting Education Program (PEP) to help fill this gap. Results of the study, establishing PEP as an evidence-based program, are described below.

The Parenting Education Program

Community Counseling Centers of Chicago launched their Parenting Education Program (PEP) in 1996. Since its inception, PEP has served over 3,500 parents and caregivers.

Through a universal parenting educational program, PEP aims to enhance positive parenting behaviors and family relationships and to address risk factors. PEP is a multi-component program that includes: group-based parenting education/training sessions, home visits, comprehensive referral services, and an on-going parent support program. The program focuses on positive parenting such as non-violent discipline, knowledge of child development, parent-child communication, and problem solving.

Group sessions are led by a skilled educator in either English or Spanish. Sessions focus on three main age groups; parents of children birth through seven years of age, parents of youth seven through twelve years of age, and parents of adolescents twelve through sixteen years old. PEP recently added a 0-3 age group based on the importance of this critical age group.



Research Methods

The aim of this project was to conduct an effectiveness study through a university-community partnership in order to move a community-developed program (PEP) towards an evidence-based practice. The components of the program examined in this study were the set of eight-week group parenting education/training sessions (the 0-7 and 7-12 age group) and the home visits provided to parents. Parents and caregivers were referred from local schools, friends/relatives, libraries, clinics, clinicians, and DCFS.

198 parents completed baseline data and were randomized to either the Parenting Education Program (PEP) or a comparison group (Financial Education Program-FLE). All participants were assessed at baseline (before the first classes), at week eight (2nd month follow up) and 24 weeks post-baseline (4th month follow-up). No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups at baseline. The following measures were used: 1) Demographics, 2) PEP pre-post test (PEP-PPT), 3) the Home Observation for the Measurement of the Environment (HOME), and 4) the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2). Process measures and fidelity of implementation measures were also utilized. All measures were available in Spanish or English and each participant completed the instrument in their language of choice.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to examine participant socio-demographic characteristics. Tests of homogeneity (Chi-square tests) and independent group *t*-tests were used to compare the randomized groups (PEP vs. FLE) in their baseline characteristics. Finally, the randomized groups were compared across outcome measures at the three points in time – baseline, two-month, and 4-month follow up. Mann-Whitney tests were used due to the non-normal distribution of scores on the outcome measures. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Parents in the Parenting Education Program had significantly higher scores in knowledge of child development, communication skills, problem solving and non-violent discipline at the 2-month follow up [$p < .01$] and again at the 4-month follow up [$p < .001$], than parents in the Financial Education Program. Similarly, PEP parents had higher scores on the HOME measure at 2-month follow up [$p < .05$] and again at the 4-month follow up [$p < .05$]. Finally, children of parents in PEP scored higher on the adaptive scale of the BASC-2 than children of parents in the Financial Education program at the 4-month follow up [$p < .01$].

Discussion

The Parenting Education Program (PEP) is an evidence-based positive parenting program. This study, which utilized a rigorous evaluation design, showed that parents enrolled in the PEP compared to parents taking a Financial Education Program:

- Had more knowledge and positive behavioral intent regarding child development, communication skills, problem solving skills, and non-violent discipline strategies.
- Had more enriching home environments for their children.
- Had children who were more positively adapted to their environment (i.e. social skills, activities of daily living, and functional communication).

Parents reported high levels of satisfaction with PEP and its facilitators, and feel they will be able to use the strategies with their children. Additionally, PEP was able to reach high-risk parents, such as those mandated to attend parenting courses by the IL Department of Children and Family Services.

Parenting education and skills programs are a way to promote the emotional and physical development of children and strive to prevent child abuse and neglect. More resources should be provided to disseminate positive parenting programs such as PEP throughout the state of Illinois so that all parents have access to critical parenting strategies and supportive services.

Community Counseling Centers of Chicago



Parenting Fundamentals

“I don’t recall my parents using positive ways of disciplining my siblings and I, but what I do recall is being abused, being put in the corner on my knees on rice for hours at a time, and being hit with whatever my father got his hands on...Trying not to repeat my family cycle is a very difficult task at times.”

--Chicago mother responding to questions posed on first day of PF class

“As a child I was hit for everything. Sometimes just a smack in the face, sometimes a head through a wall. My parents would tell me I was stupid when I did something wrong and they screamed a lot. The beatings were so severe; I was taken to be raised by my aunt. When I started hitting my own son, I called my therapist who told me about C4. Since I started taking classes, I have never hit my son, not once.”

-- 22-year-old Mother and PF graduate

Our Reach

While witnessing many children and parents facing the worst of what life doles out—domestic violence, small children with behavior problems, and adolescents who had attempted suicide—a senior family therapist noticed something else. In most of these family interactions, many of these stressed-out parents displayed unhealthy parenting practices that compounded family dysfunction. Parents had trouble communicating with their children and knowing how to discipline effectively.

Believing that the mental and emotional well-being of families depends on effective parenting skills, C4 established Parenting Fundamentals (PF) in 1996. Over the past 15 years, PF has prevented child abuse, increased effective parenting, strengthened families and increased parents' involvement in their children's education for 4,000 parents and 10,000 children in the city of Chicago.

Parenting Fundamentals is a comprehensive, evidence-based education model that delivers critical parenting skills and services into the homes of at-risk families. The program's forward-thinking focus benefits the entire family unit, breaks multi-generational patterns of dysfunction, and prevents significant social and economic cost to society, now and into the future.

An Approach for Life-Long Family Wellness

Children who experience positive parenting (e.g. parents who monitor behavior, are consistent with rules and show affection) are more likely to be engaged at school and have better self-esteem as adolescents. As adults, these children become better parents, and better grandparents.

PF is unique because of its comprehensive approach to parenting support, which incorporates work in the classroom and at home towards a lifetime of positive and effective parenting and family life.

Program components include:

- Group education/parenting skills classes that are culturally sensitive.
- Targeted age cohorts for parents of children ages 0-3, 3-7, 8-11, and 12 to 16.
- Supportive, comprehensive services including:
 - Home visits so that parent educators can view parent-child interaction in the home and assess whether other resources are needed
 - Parent support groups, led by parent facilitators to extend support well beyond classroom and home settings
- Referrals to C4 and others for a wide range of social services including:
 - Mental health or substance use counseling
 - 12-Step programs
 - Housing assistance
 - Help with accessing public benefits
 - Specialized children's services
 - Immigration issues and other community-based services

- Strategies to remove barriers to participation:
 - Classes and support groups are bi-lingual
 - Bus passes are available
 - Art enrichment programming is provided for children whose parents are taking the classes

PF has empowered parents to assume key roles in the program. Two alumni became parent educators in the program, and several graduates are now child care workers for PF. A father of two pre-teens taught a financial literacy class as part of the PF curriculum.

Reaching Families Who Need It Most

As an innovative and effective community mental health agency using evidence-based practices, C4 provides services to some of Chicago’s most vulnerable: 97 percent of C4 clients live at or below the poverty level, nearly 8 percent are homeless. The vast majority of PF families are very low-income; two thirds are Spanish-speaking, and one third is mandated to participate by the courts or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The majority of families reached by PF struggle with some form of emotional disorder or substance use.

By using effective culturally and linguistically competent teaching strategies, PF demonstrates innovation as one of the nation’s few evidenced-based parenting programs specifically targeted to urban parents of color. The vast majority of parenting education services for urban parents is adapted from programs for white suburban communities and focus almost exclusively on home visits.

Expanding Our Reach Where It Matters

About one in five Illinois children has a diagnosable mental health problem. As Voices for Illinois Children notes, early intervention and prevention are keys to improving emotional health. The statewide group called for sound policies that benefit parents and children, stating “...children do well when their families do well—and families do well when their communities support them.” C4’s Parenting Fundamentals provides that support and is poised to expand its reach throughout Illinois in response to increasing demand from schools, community-based organizations, funders and policy groups.

Research Confirms Impact

Research-based evidence of program outcomes has always been at PF’s core. PF partners with an external team of researchers at the Center for Evaluation and Sociomedical Research, to conduct process and outcome evaluations. The results have consistently demonstrated statistically significant improvement in parents’ knowledge and behavioral intent in child development, communication and problem-solving skills and non-violent discipline strategies. Funded by a number of area foundations, including the Chicago Community Trust, results of an 18-month efficacy study demonstrated a direct link between PF, retained knowledge of parenting skills, positive parenting practices and improved well-being of children.

PF's positive influence on parents and the wider community is also evident in the ongoing program demand and participation:

- Community agencies continue to request that Parenting Fundamentals be offered on site at their locations.
- Parents who are mandated to attend the PF return *voluntarily* to enroll in additional parenting classes.
- PF has been able to collaborate with local community foundations to promote the scientific rigor of the program, and develop new evidence-informed program components such as the age 0-3 curriculum.

C4: A Community Asset

C4 services, available to all PF parents, include 24-hour crisis response and emergency assessment, short term counseling, intensive psychotherapy, case management and linkage to community resources, psychiatric and medication evaluations, medication education, pre-vocational programs, outpatient substance use treatment, supported employment, a variety of therapy modalities, including art and expressive therapy, representative payee services as well as counseling services for survivors of sexual violence. Last year, C4's five facilities served more than 12,000 individuals and families with mental illnesses or emotional disturbances. More than 50 percent were children and adolescents.

Contact Us

Katharine Bensinger, LCPC
Parenting Fundamentals Program Director
Community Counseling Centers of Chicago (C4)
4740 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640
773-765-0829
katharine.bensinger@c4chicago.org



OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
125 SOUTH CLARK STREET, 9TH FLOOR • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603 • TELEPHONE: 773/553-2010 • FAX: 773/553-1030

**Early Childhood Joint FY14 Budget Hearing
Chicago Public Schools Testimony
December 3, 2012**

Thank you for holding this hearing today and for your continued support of the early childhood programs in Chicago and across the state. In an extremely difficult fiscal climate, your continued commitment to work collaboratively to try to protect the programs and services young children need to build a foundation for success in school and in life is appreciated. At Chicago Public Schools, we rely on the state to help our families access the type of comprehensive services they need to provide for their young children. We appreciate the opportunity to testify with you here today and for your continued dedication to the type of partnership that ensures we are all maximizing our efforts.

Currently, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) are engaged in a Mayoral initiative, *Chicago: Ready to Learn!* This joint application process will be used to ensure that we are investing in high quality birth to five programs across the city that are designed to meet the specific needs of Chicago's children and their families. All programs and schools interested in providing services for the 2013-14 schools year have submitted applications to one or both of the city departments, and reviews of those applications are underway. Through this process, we aim to ensure that we are devoting public funds on the types of programs that can transform families' lives and adequately prepare Chicago's youngest learners to enter kindergarten ready to learn and be successful.

In addition to the programs operated and monitored by CPS, our families are reliant on other programs supported by the state. Funding from the Department of Human Services through the home visiting budget lines (Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon) and Early Intervention help to supplement the birth to three funding allocated by CPS and to ensure that parents are given the tools they need to help their children during this critical stage of development. The research continues to point to the critical brain development during the first three years of life, and our continued investment in services for children from birth will help us prevent the need for later interventions. In addition, the Child Care Assistance Program is a funding source that many of the families served by CPS rely on to access the type of full-day care they need. Many programs that CPS works with braid funding across these sources to ensure that the quality care they offer can be accessible to working families. We urge you to protect investments in all early childhood funding, but particularly these three essential programs.

(cont'd)



OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
125 SOUTH CLARK STREET, 9TH FLOOR • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603 • TELEPHONE: 773/553-2010 • FAX: 773/553-1030

Finally, we want to reiterate our support for the Early Childhood Block Grant. Over the past few years while Block Grant funds have been reduced, Chicago Public Schools has supplemented the district's early childhood funding to ensure that our programs would not be reduced. In the face of a budget deficit at Chicago Public Schools, we fear that any additional reductions will jeopardize our ability to successfully implement *Chicago: Ready to Learn!* We must continue to serve the city's most vulnerable young children by providing the foundation of quality early childhood education. We thank you for all the support and ask that ISBE continue to partner with us in helping CPS successfully implement our early childhood initiative by maintaining the Early Childhood Block Grant.

Again, we want to thank you for the collaboration both amongst each other and between the city and state. As we all work together on behalf of our youngest learners, we help give voice to the children who cannot speak for themselves here today. As we all know, early childhood investments are the key to ensure that all children have an equal chance at success by coming to school ready to learn from the beginning. Healthy early development is supported through many programs, and our families need access to all the services that will allow them to flourish. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today and we look forward to our continued partnership on behalf of our children's future.



Illinois Early Learning Council



100 W. Randolph
Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Vision

**Every child entering kindergarten safe,
healthy, ready to succeed & eager to learn**

**Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
December 3, 2012
Testimony by Harriet Meyer
Co-Chair of the Illinois Early Learning Council**

Thank you Chairman Chico and panel for hosting this Early Childhood Joint Budget Hearing. My name is Harriet Meyer and I am the Co-Chair of Illinois' Early Learning Council. The Council strongly supports a joint early childhood budget and I am very encouraged by this first step.

Illinois has always been considered one of the strongest and most innovative states for early childhood. However, with the cuts that the early childhood programs have taken over the past three fiscal years, we are falling behind other States that continue to expand their investments in early childhood education. The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant will allow us to make needed improvements to the system but we have to be able to sustain and build on these improvements.

Yet, this year we saw an 8% cut in Preschool for All which follows an earlier reduction of 10%. There have been comparable reductions in Human Services and DCFS which further erode our ability to serve the most at-risk children. 2012 was to be the year that we achieved our goal of providing high quality early childhood education for all of our children. Yet in 2012, 18,000 fewer children were enrolled in Preschool for All than at the height of the program. This year, that loss has risen to an estimated 22,000 children. The latest figures show that only 40% of our four year olds are attending state-or federally-funded Pre-K programs, and the rate is even lower for three year olds and at-risk infants and toddlers.

It has been proven time and again that investments in early childhood will save money in the long run. It is estimated that the K-12 system saves \$7 dollars in education costs for each \$1 dollar that is spent on early learning. For those of us in education and human services, it is now very clear that the only way to ensure sustainable funding for early childhood is to address the pension problem.

Now I would like to say something as a private citizen of the state of Illinois, I am concerned that the increased pension costs will continue to squeeze funding from vital early childhood services. We need comprehensive pension reform so that early learning and other vital programs for young children and families will not be cut further. We cannot let past decisions on pensions affect the future for our children – it is time to resolve the problems with the pension system so that our State can get to a more stable fiscal condition.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to continuing to work to bring Illinois back to the forefront of early childhood.



Testimony: ISBE, DHS, and DCFS Joint FY14 Early Childhood Budget Hearing

Submitted by Sarah Rios: Parent Council Member and Parent Health Promoter, Erie Neighborhood House

11/29/12

To Whom It May Concern:

1701 West Superior St.
Chicago, IL 60622
Tel 312.563.5800
Fax 312.563.5810

Erie Neighborhood House, a settlement house, located in the West Town Neighborhood of Chicago has been working with immigrant populations since 1870. The mission of the organization is to promote a just and inclusive society by strengthening low-income, primarily Latino families through skill-building, access to critical resources, advocacy and collaborative action.

1347 West Erie St
Chicago, IL 60642
Tel 312.666.3430
Fax 312.666.3955

My name is Sarah Rios and I am a parent, health promoter and parent council member at Erie. I have three children aged 2, 3 and 5 and my husband was deported last year. Through this difficult time, I relied on Erie House but because of the restrictive rules and shrinking funding of the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program, I am no longer eligible to receive money to help me pay for my childcare.

Erie Neighborhood House and I urge representatives from ISBE and DHS to propose the restoration of funding for early care and education programs in each of your respective budgets. More specifically, we recommend the following:

1. Restore funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant in the ISBE budget by *at least* \$24.9 million to bring total spending to \$325,123,500. It is vital that the state recommits to high-quality early childhood education, a proven intervention, by taking the fiscal steps necessary to go above and beyond the \$380 million invested in Preschool for All in FY09.
2. Restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program in the DHS budget by an amount sufficient to scale back the increased parent co-payments initiated in FY13. Changes in the pay scale have driven many children and their families out of licensed child care settings.

The Erie Programs that my children cannot participate anymore were an enormous help to me and to their development. I was able to work while they were learning in the program but I also knew that they were getting healthy meals, social and emotional development, exercise and literacy skills. All of these aspects completely necessary for my children and other parent's children, like me, who are struggling to make a difference in our family's lives as we try to better our situations as productive people in the community. The state cannot afford to educate some children and not others, if we are going to move forward as a society all children no matter who they need to be able to receive quality care and education, from a place like Erie Neighborhood House, which now sadly my children cannot attend.



Erie has been a second family for me that has reached out and has gone above and beyond what I could have ever expected. I know that my story is not unique and that is even more impetus for my testimony, I write for all parents that have not used their voice like I am doing now to strongly encourage all of you to please consider how incredibly important funding to programs like this is for the benefit of all children.

So again, I urge you to please restore funding to the Early Childhood Block Grant and also to please restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program, two programs that are helping children learn and allowing parents like me to work.

1701 West Superior St.
Chicago, IL 60622
Tel 312.563.5800
Fax 312.563.5810

Sincerely

Sarah Rios

1347 West Erie St
Chicago, IL 60642
Tel 312.666.3430
Fax 312.666.3955

Children Cut from State-Funded Preschool in Illinois

County	Number of Children Enrolled in Preschool		Cuts between FY 10 and FY 12	
	FY 2010 County Totals	FY 2012 County Totals	Number of Children Cut*	Percentage of Children Cut*
Lee	360	80	-280	-78%
Livingston	365	430	65	18%
Logan	80	80	0	0%
Macon	898	680	-218	-24%
Macoupin	600	600	0	0%
Madison	2,098	1,748	-350	-17%
Marion	280	275	-5	-2%
Marshall	75	120	45	60%
Mason	170	160	-10	-6%
Massac	180	20	-160	-89%
McDonough	274	337	63	23%
McHenry	923	865	-58	-6%
McLean	776	600	-176	-23%
Menard	120	120	0	0%
Mercer	80	110	30	38%
Monroe	192	80	-112	-58%
Montgomery	494	470	-24	-5%
Morgan	391	300	-91	-23%
Moultrie	100	96	-4	-4%
Ogle	310	200	-110	-35%
Peoria	1,416	1,060	-356	-25%
Perry	100	102	2	2%
Piatt	158	80	-78	-49%
Pike	260	260	0	0%
Pope	40	40	0	0%
Pulaski	100	40	-60	-60%
Putnam	80	80	0	0%
Randolph	220	180	-40	-18%
Richland	210	223	13	6%
Rock Island	1,500	1,300	-200	-13%
Saline	437	300	-137	-31%
Sangamon	1,850	1,380	-470	-25%
Schuyler	80	100	20	25%
Scott	80	80	0	0%
Shelby	180	120	-60	-33%
St. Clair	2,224	1,800	-424	-19%
Stark	80	60	-20	-25%
Stephenson	350	300	-50	-14%
Tazewell	522	460	-62	-12%
Union	180	160	-20	-11%
Vermilion	748	550	-198	-26%
Wabash	120	100	-20	-17%
Warren	268	260	-8	-3%
Washington	90	95	5	6%
Wayne	240	220	-20	-8%
White	180	180	0	0%
Whiteside	630	490	-140	-22%
Will	2,120	1,612	-508	-24%
Williamson	760	680	-80	-11%
Winnebago	2,985	2,360	-625	-21%
Woodford	180	140	-40	-22%

Average number of children cut per county: 144 Average percentage of children cut: 17 percent Total Preschool cuts, FY 2009 - FY 2012 : 17,623**

Sources: Illinois State Board of Education; Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map; Chicago Public Schools (see endnote 8 for details).

Notes: * negative numbers represent a cut in children served; positive numbers represent an increase in children served.

**the total preschool children cut, 17,623, is the statewide estimate of the number of children cut from FY 2009 to FY 2012.

Children Cut from State-Funded Preschool in Illinois

County	Number of Children Enrolled in Preschool		Cuts between FY 10 and FY 12	
	FY 2010 County Totals	FY 2012 County Totals	Number of Children Cut*	Percentage of Children Cut*
Adams	700	420	-280	-40%
Alexander	160	140	-20	-13%
Bond	260	180	-80	-31%
Boone	320	80	-240	-75%
Brown	80	80	0	0%
Bureau	499	448	-51	-10%
Calhoun	80	0	-80	-100%
Carroll	200	160	-40	-20%
Cass	220	260	40	18%
Champaign	1,129	1,020	-109	-10%
Christian	460	340	-120	-26%
Clark	220	140	-80	-36%
Clay	247	220	-27	-11%
Clinton	250	190	-60	-24%
Coles	240	206	-34	-14%
Cook (Chicago)	24,009	19,782	-4,227	-18%
Cook (suburban)	13,393	11,640	-1,753	-13%
Crawford	278	280	2	1%
Cumberland	80	80	0	0%
DeKalb	385	300	-85	-22%
Dewitt	160	160	0	0%
Douglas	200	140	-60	-30%
DuPage	2,536	1,616	-920	-36%
Edgar	220	170	-50	-23%
Edwards	40	40	0	0%
Effingham	340	10	-330	-97%
Fayette	280	150	-130	-46%
Ford	95	40	-55	-58%
Franklin	474	476	2	0%
Fulton	300	260	-40	-13%
Gallatin	57	40	-17	-30%
Greene	180	160	-20	-11%
Grundy	300	240	-60	-20%
Hamilton	80	80	0	0%
Hancock	247	258	11	4%
Hardin	20	20	0	0%
Henderson	80	70	-10	-13%
Henry	500	460	-40	-8%
Iroquois	120	180	60	50%
Jackson	628	556	-72	-11%
Jasper	100	79	-21	-21%
Jefferson	730	460	-270	-37%
Jersey	160	160	0	0%
Jo Daviess	200	220	20	10%
Johnson	204	119	-85	-42%
Kane	2,856	2,652	-204	-7%
Kankakee	908	852	-56	-6%
Kendall	454	460	6	1%
Knox	487	404	-83	-17%
Lake	2,527	2,740	213	8%
LaSalle	690	600	-90	-13%
Lawrence	180	160	-20	-11%

Average number of children cut per county: 144 Average percentage of children cut: 17 percent Total Preschool cuts, FY 2009 - FY 2012 : 17,623**

Sources: Illinois State Board of Education; Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map; Chicago Public Schools (see endnote 8 for details).

Notes: * negative numbers represent a cut in children served; positive numbers represent an increase in children served.
 **the total preschool children cut, 17,623, is the statewide estimate of the number of children cut from FY 2009 to FY 2012.

(Table Continued on Next Page)

STATEMENT OF
HON. ROBERT BERLIN
DUPAGE COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY
on behalf of
FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS ILLINOIS
before the
Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
December 3, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments as you begin the challenging task of preparing a budget for Fiscal Year 2014. My name is Bob Berlin, and I am the State's Attorney in DuPage County. I am here today as a member of the Executive Committee of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS*. We are an anti-crime organization led by more than 330 Illinois police chiefs, sheriffs, state's attorneys, leaders of police officer organizations, and crime survivors.

I'd like to commend the agencies represented here today for embracing early childhood as both a budget and policy priority.

The law enforcement leaders of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *ILLINOIS* work hard to see that those who break the law are taken off the street. We all agree, however, that we have a responsibility to be proactive, and not just reactive to crime. If we can prevent criminal activity on the front end, we can preserve valuable resources while keeping our communities safe at the same time. And we know from research that the most effective and fiscally sound way to do that is to invest in children during their earliest years.

Research clearly tells us that high-quality preschool dramatically improves the chances that children will grow up to be successful, productive, law-abiding adults. That's why law enforcement leaders from across the state have vocally opposed cuts to ISBE's Early Childhood Block Grant.

Cuts to the Block Grant have resulted in a loss of almost 22,000 three and four year-olds in state-funded preschool since 2009. Even before the FY 2013 cut to preschool, 70 percent of Illinois counties had lost preschool slots. Most of these counties have lost multiple classrooms, and some counties have almost no program left to speak of. My county, DuPage, has lost slots for nearly 1,000 children since

2009-- a number that does not yet include the impact of the \$25 million cut from the Block Grant for the current year.

With my written testimony, I've submitted a chart that details the cuts to preschool county-by-county through FY 2012.

Our concerns do not stop at the state's preschool program. The Department of Human Services houses two home visiting programs, known as Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon, which provide coaching and support to at-risk parents of infants and toddlers. In addition to the myriad of positive child development and health outcomes these programs provide, research shows home visiting can dramatically reduce incidents of child abuse and neglect as well as future crime.

These programs were spared cuts in the final FY 2013 budget passed by the General Assembly, and I urge the same this year. Illinois is the recipient of a \$19 million federal grant to expand these programs, and is eligible to receive more in the next two years. But in order to qualify, the state is required to maintain its own funding for home visiting at FY 2010 levels. If funding for Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon is cut in the DHS budget, Illinois could lose this federal grant, and along with it, an unprecedented opportunity to prevent child abuse and neglect incidents in our highest-risk communities.

Finally, quality child care is a critical resource for low-income families in a difficult economic environment. The Child Care Assistance Program in DHS received a \$5.3 million funding cut for FY 2013. However, the actual programmatic cut to Child Care Assistance resulted in a 37% average increase in copayments for parents. Funding for child care must be stabilized so low-income, working parents can afford quality care and maintain employment.

We all recognize the challenges at hand in crafting a new budget. Fortunately, when it comes to ensuring better outcomes for kids, we know the right approach: get them help early and often. The research is clear: investing in our children in their formative years results in significant savings for society. We can pay now, or pay a lot more later. We are committed to working with you, the Governor, and the General Assembly to secure the safety of our communities by ensuring the youngest Illinoisans have access to quality early childhood programs.

Thank you to the Chair and the rest of the committee for the opportunity to offer my comments.

Haymarket Center

Testimony Regarding Child Care and Early Head Start Services for Women and their Children in Treatment for Substance Use Disorders

Good Morning:

My name is Dr. Bakahia Madison, Director of Women's and Children's Services at Haymarket Center in Chicago. Today I am advocating for increased funding for child care and for the Early Head Start Program. Haymarket Center is Chicago's largest provider of treatment for substance use and mental health disorders. We serve 20,000 individuals a year, 50% of which are women. Our clients come from every area of Illinois, but mostly from Chicago. Haymarket has 40 beds devoted to residential treatment for pregnant women and women with children, and an additional 10 residential beds in a women's recovery home. Haymarket believes in a family-centered approach to treatment, so women with small children are able to bring them into the treatment center with them. Because the women we serve often don't have a safe place to place their children, they would never access treatment unless their children could come with them into the treatment center.

While mothers focus on their treatment during the day, Haymarket provides DCFS-licensed child care for the children. We use evidence-based development curricula to help ensure the children learn, develop, and grow in a healthy way. For many years Haymarket has made the commitment to operate our child care center, even though the current rates do not come close to covering the costs of providing this service. The economic climate in Illinois has made this commitment increasingly difficult to uphold. Haymarket has helped save Illinois millions and millions of dollars through helping to give birth to nearly 1,800 drug-free babies. **We strongly advocate for continued, and even increased funding for child care** to help enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. Offer parenting classes that empower parents take the lead role in their child's healthy development, connect children to early intervention services, sustain programming to promote school readiness, and reduce exposure to substance abuse and trauma.

Early Head Start is another program Haymarket has implemented, in partnership with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, that has had a tremendous, positive impact on helping the growth and development of families in our care. Women often come to Haymarket without having had pre-natal care or any positive understanding of how to care for their infants and young children in a healthy way. Early Head Start provides the support that these young families need in order to thrive when they return to the community following their treatment at Haymarket. **We strongly advocate for continued funding for Early Head Start programming in Illinois** – we have seen at first hand the successes of this much-needed program.

Thank you for your attention this morning, and please keep Illinois' most vulnerable women and children in mind as you make difficult budget decisions in the months ahead.

Early/Head Start Talking Points
Joint Budget Hearing - December 3, 2012

Illinois Head Start Association

Lauri Morrison-Frichtl
Illinois Head Start Association
3435 Liberty Drive
Springfield, IL 62704
Phone: 217-241-3511
Email: lfrichtl@ilheadstart.org

FFY12 IL Early and Head Start Funding:

- \$261M for Head Start – 36,834 children ages 3-5
- \$37.8M for Early Head Start – 4,909 children ages birth to 3 and pregnant women
- Total - \$298.8M and 41,743 children and pregnant women
- An additional 470 Migrant & Seasonal Head Start children are served, ages birth to 5, using \$___M
- 48 IL agencies provide the services, including public/private for and non-profit community-based organizations, school districts, city & state government, and a university
- 8984 estimated number of staff

IL Head Start/Early Head Start is included in federal continuing resolution, which lasts until March 2013. Grantee agencies are being funded at about 80% of their total right now.

The federal sequester (automatic funding cuts), if implemented as planned at roughly 8.2% under current law, and would result in cuts to Head Start/Early Head Start that could mean:

- Loss of 100K children nationwide
- Loss of about 3,423 IL Head Start/Early Head Start children and more or less about \$24.5M
- Loss of classrooms and support staff (education, social service, health, disability)

Head Start and Early Head Start are integrated with in communities and are a critical pillar of support for the most vulnerable and at risk children and families. We believe that success is the flow of all three (HS/EHS, Child Care and PFA) funding streams into communities. Think of it as the three legged stool with each leg/pillar of services provided by HS/EHS, Child Care and PFA. When one leg is shortened the stool is not stable and children and families slide from the top. Thus we strongly advocate for

- 1) Maintain Illinois' commitment to current funding levels lowers the risk of destabilizing families and the fragile economic position of our communities.
- 2) Recognize that increased requirements of quality care cost money and we should be willing to invest more funds in early childhood if we expect programs to achieve higher standards.
- 3) It's all about what we value; we have plenty of research to indicate that strong investments in early learning are key to long term success; do we value our children and their families?

The opportunity to succeed in life is a core American value and an extensive body of research indicates that early learning provides that opportunity to our most vulnerable children.

Protect funding for our children to help us build a smarter, healthier, and stronger Illinois.



Health & Disability Advocates

205 W. Monroe, Suite 200, Chicago, IL 60606
312-223-9600 | FAX 312-223-9518

**Joint Early Childhood
Budget Hearing
Department of Human Services,
Department of Children and Family Services, and
State Board of Education**

Health & Disability Advocates Testimony December 3, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Health & Disability Advocates (HDA) is a national organization based in Chicago that uses multiple strategies to promote income security and improve health care access and services. HDA's Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children (CMLPC) addresses the full continuum of children's needs through lawyers and health care providers working together to help prevent illness and tackle social and economic barriers impacting access to health care and outcomes. CMLPC attorneys work at medical partnership sites including La Rabida Children's Hospital, Comer Children's Hospital, Lurie Children's Hospital and Friend Family Health Center (FQHC) to provide legal services for low-income families, including assistance with Early Intervention and special education issues for children with developmental delays, disabilities and special health needs.

Amy Zimmerman, CMLPC's director, has also had recent opportunities to work collaboratively with Early Intervention ("EI") staff as an appointed member to the Governor's Early Intervention Task Force convened under House Resolution 50, and is currently serving on the EI Service Delivery Approaches work group. She also serves on a number of other statewide committees and task forces that focus on issues specific to early childhood.

As you consider the critical needs served through access to DHS, DCFS and ISBE early childhood programs, we ask that you consider the following:

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

CMLPC recognizes the fundamental importance of providing families with access to quality and affordable child care to support the social and emotional development of young children. DHS currently provides low-income working families with child care assistance through its Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). With CCAP support, families are able to share child care costs with DHS based on a sliding scale while they attend work, school or job training. In spite of the support available via CCAP for some families, other families have few options to receive quality and affordable child care. Those families who are unable to work or attend school do not currently qualify for CCAP support, even if they are in need of child care assistance.

In years past, non-DCFS involved parents or guardians with disabilities, or families unable to work who had a child with a disability, were able to receive child care assistance through the DCFS Specialized Child Care initiative. The program, which was housed under DCFS, established special categories whereby families who did not qualify under CCAP, could nevertheless receive support with no co-payment. CMLPC first learned of this initiative in early 2012 from client who faced a common situation for the families we serve, where both she and her child had disabilities. The mother's disabilities included lupus and sickle cell, and she required dialysis and intermittent hospitalizations. Due to the extent of her own medical condition, the mother was simply not able to meet all of the demands of her daughter's day-to-day care and special needs and give her daughter full-day quality early childhood instruction without access to child care assistance. Through the Specialized Child Care initiative, she was ultimately able to receive support under a special category allocated for families of children with special needs and incapacitated adults. Finding this program was not easy. The first time the mother applied for child care assistance, she was denied. CMLPC staff did some digging, and was able to uncover the DCFS program. We are unaware of anything on DCFS, DHS or partner websites that either promote or describe the program.

Recently CMLPC again sought the support of this program only to be told by Doris McDonald at the DCFS Office of Child Development that funds are no longer available to serve these categories of need and that the program may be permanently de-funded. No other child care assistance exists for such families where the child and/or parent has disabilities. And while some of these families should be able to access half-day Head Start programs, the reality is that the availability of half-day slots are decreasing as agencies seek to blend funding streams and maximize funding dollars by filling slots with children who qualify for full-time care.

Parents and guardians who have disabilities often have a most significant need for child care assistance, even if they are not able to work or attend school or training programs. Additionally, families with children who have disabilities may require child care support in order to address the special developmental needs of the child, including motor, language and cognitive development. Often, a child's disability is so extensive that a guardian may not be able to work, yet still requires child care in order to address the full range of their child's needs.

The language of the Public Aid Code, which establishes the categories of families able to receive child care support under CCAP, states that "families with special needs as defined by rule" should receive support. 305 ILCS 5/9A-11. In our research of the issue, CMLPC has not located any provision in DCFS or DHS rules that further define "families with special needs." Those families of children with disabilities or parents or guardians with disabilities should certainly be provided with this support. We would ask that these families either be included as CCAP eligible or that the DCFS Specialized Child Care initiative be adequately funded to continue to cover child care assistance for disabled parents/guardians and disabled children. Additionally, since families with special needs are explicitly mentioned as a group that is covered to receive child care assistance under the Public Aid Code, these terms should be further defined by rule to ensure that this critical need is appropriately addressed.

EARLY INTERVENTION

Consideration of the following suggestions should lead to more efficient and cost effective delivery of early childhood services. First, DHS, DCFS, and ISBE should track and collect data on children that have been referred for early intervention and early childhood special education evaluations and not found eligible for services. Considering that there are thousands of children each year in these categories, in order to determine whether the Illinois early childhood system is operating at an optimal level it is necessary to track the cost of government intervention throughout the lives of children referred for disability evaluations and the developmental outcomes of such children. Without data, it is hard to know if eligibility determinations promote both good outcomes for individual children and sound fiscal decisions. This is especially true for children between birth and 5, who are initially denied services but are found to need services after they turn school age.

Second, the Early Intervention Taskforce's recommendation, which was supported by DHS, to implement a web-based data system for Early Intervention, must be implemented. We understand that work on the front end portion of the web-based data system was recently halted after significant time and investment. The Taskforce found that the current non-web-based Cornerstone data system has not evolved to meet the demands of an increasingly data dependent federal program. A web-based system will better track data the federal government requires, can inform program decision-making, and importantly, will allow service providers and medical homes and case managers to interact in real-time to better support children and families. According to the Taskforce report a web-based data system that allows for "real-time" data collection, analysis and use would also "result in annual savings to the program..."

Third, through work on the EI Services Delivery Approaches workgroup we have learned that some CFCs have service coordinators with caseloads as high as 100 children. It is very difficult for service coordinators to effectively serve this many children and families. It is our understanding that CFC contracts are to be rebid in January. Before this happens, we think that it is important to convene stakeholders to look at improving the current contract with an eye to exploring a prospective budgeting system that uses active cases vs. active IFSPs for a fairer funding formula; and reviews the system of incentives/penalties to determine their current utility to the system.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide public testimony. Please contact Amy Zimmerman, Director, Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children with questions or comments at azimmerman@hdadvocates.org.

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Parent Mentor Program
Early Childhood Budget Hearing
Monday, December 3, 2012
Submitted by Ahlam Jbara, ICIRR
ajbara@icirr.org, 312-399-3796 (cell)

Testimonies:

- 1) Ahlam Jbara, ICIRR Deputy Director
- 2) Maria Pesqueira, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, CEO
- 3) Mayra Sarabia, Southwest Organizing Project, Leader

Ahlam Jbara:

Good Morning,

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for providing us this opportunity to share the importance of continuing much needed programs for our communities. My name is Ahlam Jbara, Deputy Director at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. ICIRR is currently administering the PMP. We are here with our member organizations to encourage ISBE to continue Funding the award winning "Parent Mentor program". This year alone we heard from over 20 organizations statewide interested in implementing the PMP. We received 14 proposals and we have an additional 6 more areas interested in participating. This year with ISBE support we were able to expand the PMP to not only additional Chicago communities but also to southwest suburbs, northwest suburbs and even Will County and Moline, IL. We ask you to continue funding this program and increase funding to \$2,000,000 from the current \$1, 000,000 so we can fund additional areas.

Maria Pesqueira:

Mayra's Sarabia testimony

"Hello, my name is Mayra Sarabia, I'm the Parent Mentor coordinator for the Southwest Organizing Project's Parent Mentor program.

I began over four years ago as mentor at Eberhart elementary school, where my daughter graduated from and my son still attends. After a 1 of year experience working in a second grade classroom, SWOP saw my interest in being involved in the school and asked me to coordinate the program.

Last year I got the opportunity of get out of my comfort zone and I was offered to be part of the parent engagement institute and be a coordinator of Cook elementary school located in the Auburn Greshman community. It's a predominately African-American school were I meet great women and learn so much from them and their culture. Being a coordinator has give me many opportunities and satisfactions to seen mothers that they have an ordinary life and then transform into a extraordinary life by developing as leaders in their communities.

It's so great to see their transformation as the same time I been transformed and as a parent mentor and a role model for my children. I am looking forward to help train the new start up partners through ICIRR's Parent Mentor Program.

Thank you."



Illinois Education Association-NEA

Cinda Klickna, President
Kathi Griffin, Vice President
Al Llorens, Secretary-Treasurer
Audrey Soglin, Executive Director

100 East Edwards Street
Springfield, IL 62704-1999
(217) 544-0706 Fax 217.544.7383

The Illinois Education Association believes that every child in Illinois, regardless of age or social situation is guaranteed a high quality public education as part of the state constitution. This is the promise that the people of Illinois make to their children. It is a promise that must be kept.

We are all aware of the research that leads to the conclusion that children are simply more likely to succeed in school if they begin the formal process of schooling kindergarten-ready. This is the necessary product that early childhood education delivers to our society. Early childhood education is the basis on which the remainder of our education system is built. Without it the promise of a high quality public education is, for many of the children of our state, simply an empty one. Unless we, as a state, provide for each and every child and ensure that they arrive kindergarten-ready for their first day of formal schooling we fail them.

While it is tempting to simply call for more funding for all areas of education the reality of the state budget is that we are likely, at least in the short run, to see decreasing amounts of money put into our education system. Rather than decrying this misguided approach to the allocation of state resources we chose to focus on how to live within the constants imposed by this process of depriving our children of what they deserve and our society of the basic human infrastructure that it so desperately needs. If we cannot, as a state, focus on improving our system of public education then we must certainly focus on doing the least harm.

To this end, we ask that, as you consider early childhood education, you do so within the context of our P-20 system of public education and that you consider putting the limited available resources to use for those least able to provide for themselves.

Illinois has, to its credit, long recognized that the primary responsibility of a system of public education funding must be to guarantee a high quality education to all of the children of the state and that the most pressing need is in communities that are unable to fund such a system locally. Our over-reliance of local resources and the increasing concentration of those living in poverty have, in the recent past, exacerbated this problem. That is, there are more children who are born into families who live in communities that are unable to, based on local resources, provide a high quality system of public education for them. This is true for the entire P-20 system and affects children of all ages and students at every level of the educational continuum.

The challenge for us as a society is not simply that we fund early childhood education or any level of our educational system, but that we use the resources, the dollars we have available to us to fund those children who are most in need of services and live in communities that are least able to pay for a high quality system of public education from local resources. The job of the state, through the funding system, is to provide a sort of safety net for those of our children whose place of residence does not allow the local community to provide adequately for them.

The State of Illinois has, to its credit, had in place a funding system for our K-12 education system that, for years, has guaranteed a minimum level of spending for each and every child in the state. The general state aid formula is successful in large part because it adjusts for the local inputs, the local taxes that school districts bring to the table and delivers to those districts who cannot provide some minimum level of funding (and by extension the high quality system of public education guaranteed by the constitution) state monies that enable each district in the state to spend some annually defined minimum amount of money on each student in the system. Our system of funding the K-12 education system is not perfect, but it does what it was designed to do. It enables each district in the state to provide some minimum level of educational goods and services to every student. The general state aid formula does this by adjusting the district grant based on available local resources and while one may argue that the formula accomplishes this in a less than perfect manner it still, at some basic level, channels more state funds into those districts with the greatest need. In doing so the formula results in an efficient distribution of funds; it makes available resources to those children who live in communities that cannot provide for their needs locally.

One shortcoming of the early childhood funding system is that it does not adjust for local wealth in the distribution of money. As a result children in wealthy districts, districts that are able to provide for the children in their schools, receive the same grant as children in communities that simply do not have the resources to provide for them. While this is not a problem when the state economy is providing sufficient tax dollars to fund all of the needs of the state it is a distinct disadvantage when the economy does not provide sufficient revenue for the state to meet all of the needs of its children. This is the case for the time in which we live. It is time for us to consider adjusting the early childhood grant for local wealth so that the money we have available is spent on those children for whom the local tax base fails to provide the resources needed, the money needed, to fund early childhood education locally.

In a time when funds are short, states must think carefully about whom state funds need to be focused. It is the position of the Illinois Education Association that, with funds in short supply for the State of Illinois, we need to consider which of our children, at all levels of our education system, have the greatest need and focus the available state resources on the communities in which these children live. Therefore, it is our recommendation that the early childhood grant be adjusted based on available local resources and that this adjustment is applied in the same manner to school districts and to other agencies that may provide early childhood education.

To do less is simply to spend our available dollars in an inefficient manner.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daryl C. Morrison". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Daryl Morrison
Education Policy and Agency Relations Director
Illinois Education Association



Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
Written testimony submitted by: Illinois Action for Children
Monday, December 3, 2012

Illinois Action for Children, a statewide advocacy organization working directly with parents and child care providers to advocate for high quality care and education, respectfully submits this written testimony to the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing in support of fully funding the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program.

As the Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Family Services, and Illinois State Board of Education collaborate to create a comprehensive system of early care and education, I hope the information provided here will demonstrate how the DHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is a critical tool for providing every Illinois child with a genuine opportunity to succeed in school and life.

WHAT IS THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANDSCAPE IN ILLINOIS?

Illinois has become a pioneer state in realizing the connection between child care and early education and treating them as one industry, called the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) system. The goals of the early childhood care and education system are to 1) support low-income families in attaining self-sufficiency by subsidizing child care while parents are at work or in school, and 2) improve developmental outcomes of young children being cared for outside the home.

Early care and education in Illinois are provided in a wide variety of settings and program models, ranging from informal care by relatives and neighbors to school-based programs. Public support for these services is provided through three primary funding streams:

1. the Child Care Assistance Program (a DHS program),
2. the Early Childhood Block Grant (an ISBE program),
3. and Head Start & Early Head Start (a federal program).

Each of these funding streams has its own eligibility criteria and program requirements that grow out of distinct goals of the department.

Early education programs such as Illinois Preschool for All and federal Head Start help at-risk children under 5 become ready for school. Since these programs are often limited to half-day programs of 2½ or 3 hours each day, they are not accessible for many parents who work longer hours and cannot drop off and pick up their children for part-day sessions. CCAP helps many parents overcome this obstacle. It allows parents and providers to combine child care with early education in a full-day program. By allowing low-income parents to work full-time and still enroll their children in free early

education programs, CCAP is an essential component for Illinois' early childhood system.

Home visiting and other support services, provided through both the ISBE and IDHS departments, provide another important component of the ECE landscape in Illinois. Home visiting is an effective tool used to prevent child abuse and improve child well-being by providing education and services in families' homes through parent education and connection to community resources. Young children most at risk of school failure too often need additional family supports but do not access the care they need. Thus, they start school not just behind their peers in learning goals but also in their social-emotional well-being.

Illinois has done a good job of casting a wide-net of support for families with young children – but to see the desired outcomes of children ready for school, we must adequately fund programs that might not be seen as 'leaning' but provide the essential building blocks for school success.

Child Care & Monitoring

The IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with access to quality, affordable child care. An adequately funded CCAP serves three critical functions:

- 1) it allows low-income parents to work, support their families, and move toward economic stability by completing education and training programs;
- 2) it provides vulnerable children with the early care and learning experiences they need to allow them to succeed in school and in life; and
- 3) it partners with ISBE's Preschool for All to provide enhanced educational experiences with 04 certified teachers for children in community-based settings for full year, full day care.

Currently, CCAP helps parents with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level (\$2944/month for a family of three in 2012) pay for child care. Parents may choose the provider that best fits the needs of their family. CCAP reimburses the provider at the established state rate, and families are required to pay part of the cost of care through a sliding scale co-payment that is based on family size and income.

Illinois' Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has the important responsibility of ensuring the basic health and safety of Illinois' children as the sole licensing agent of child care providers. Licensing serves as a floor of health and safety for all types of licensed care arrangements, which includes child care centers, homes and group homes, and provides the foundation on which quality initiatives can be built.

DCFS' efforts ideally provide Illinois with a streamlined statewide standardization of licensing procedures and requirements. Unfortunately, consistent under-funding of DCFS licensing division has impacted the efficiency of this function. Regional licensing offices struggle with staff shortages, driving caseloads up and impeding timely, proficient licensing. In Illinois, there are over 3,000 licensed child care centers, of which 2,700 work with the IDHS CCAP program caring for low-income children. There are nearly 11,000 licensed child care homes, and over 9,000 accept children in the CCAP. Illinois must

make the safety of its most vulnerable citizens a priority and hold DCFS accountable for performance and outcomes.

ECE Collaborations

The CCAP successfully collaborates with other early care and education providers and funding streams. New collaborative program models that blend child care funds with Early Head Start, Head Start and Preschool for All funds have been developed to provide educationally enriching full-day, full-year services to children in low-income families. Through such collaboration, we are able to maximize dollars to improve quality and access

Preschool for All and Child Care:

Thousands of children statewide participate in these programs that receive funding from ISBE's Preschool for All and IDHS' CCAP and are typically located in a community-based child care program. Programs must meet the requirements of the state Pre-K program, including providing all children at least 2.5 hours per day of instruction by a certified teacher. To fulfill this requirement, a variety of models are employed, including placing a full-time certified teacher in each room or having one certified teacher serve part-time in more than one classroom. As a result, children at-risk of academic failure have access to a high quality classroom experience with a research-based curriculum that will transition them into the state's k-12 system with greater chance for success.

Head Start and Child Care: Over 9,000 children ages 3 through 5 participate in programs funded by the Federal Head Start program. These programs are combined with the state-administered IDHS' CCAP which allows child care centers to convert a half-day Head Start program into full-day, in addition to adding the fuller complement of family supports included in the Federal Head Start program but not included in the funding of the state's CCAP. Further, Early Head Start, the federal early learning program for children 0-3, is by and large housed in community-based child care programs and is a child's best preparation to starting school and life ready to succeed.

The CCAP is intentional with its collaborations with other early childhood programs. The full benefits of sound early childhood programs can be most effectively realized through integrated state and community level systems of care and education that deal comprehensively with the needs of children and their families.

Facts on ECE Use Among IL Families

At any given time, two-thirds of families with children from infant to 5 years old are using some type of non-parental care. By the time their children reach age six, 77 percent of Illinois families will have placed them in non-parental care. Families with lower education levels are less likely to enroll their young children in formal programs such as center-based child care or early education programs. That is, they are more likely to use home-based child care. One-third of Illinois families that use some non-parental child care and early education, combine two or more types of child care and early education in providing care for one child.

Use of more than one type of care is prevalent among those children ages 3 to 5 who are enrolled in formal programs. About half combine formal programs with some other type of non-parental care. As Illinois explores how to improve school readiness and

provide preschool opportunities for all 3- to 5-year-old children, they should keep in mind that most families will only be able to access these opportunities if they are in some manner fused with child care programs.

HOW CAN ILLINOIS IMPROVE THE ECE SYSTEM TO ENSURE CHILD READINESS FOR SCHOOL AND FOR SUCCESS?

Experts in child development know that children's readiness for school is multi-faceted, encompassing the whole range of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills that children need to thrive. Decades of research have proven that high quality, nurturing early learning experiences with qualified, consistent caregivers from birth to age five greatly impacts success or failure in society. All children, regardless of the type of program their parents choose for them, should have access to high quality environments that promote school readiness.

In a recent compilation of research findings, James J. Heckman, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics at the University of Chicago, along with a consortium of economists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and neuroscientists, show that investments in the developmental growth of at-risk young children through early childhood programs yield significant returns in future years. For example, for every dollar invested in quality early childhood education programs, government and society save \$7 to \$10 in future costs. These programs reduce special and remedial education, delinquency, crime control and public assistance while increasing grade retention in school and, later, income and tax contributions.

Every child needs a high quality early developmental experience as a basic preparation for future success in school, college, career and life. Unfortunately, many child care programs serving families with lower incomes lack the resources necessary to provide this experience.

The Illinois Department of Human Services works to raise the quality of child care. Its Quality Rating and Improvement System trains providers in best practices and rewards them for achieving progress. It awards providers grants to pursue professional development and improve their facilities. The Department also permits qualified programs to blend childcare and early education funding.

Child care is essential for working families. While there are many reasons for the current patterns of use of child care and early education, inaccessibility should not be among them. As a result, it is important to set CCAP copayments, income eligibility and reimbursement rates at a level such that all types of child care are financially accessible to all families and to look at creative ways of allowing children of working parents to attend preschool while still receiving quality care for the remainder of their parents' work day.



Presentation Talking Points Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing

- A child is not reached by one service alone. To make the greatest impact in a child's life it takes a combination of programs and services.
- The Gateways to Opportunity Professional Development System administered by INCCRRA uses a cross sector, cross system platform that offers professional development to prepare well-qualified professionals who nurture and support development and learning of children, youth and families across all settings.
- The common denominator across many of these programs and services is child care. The most at risk children and families that truly need quality services and programs are often found in child care.
- We need to invest in child care and in the individuals providing child care.
- We also need to invest and focus on the whole child. Kindergarten readiness is not defined by cognitive development alone. It takes a combination of services to truly prepare a child for Kindergarten.
- Gateways to Opportunity takes a systems approach that links the combination of partners (child care, mental health, Preschool for All, Head Start) to a combination of services from data collection to professional development to increase the quality of care for children and families.

Illinois Public Health Association
Testimony to the Illinois State Board of Education
In Support of Increased Funding for Early Childhood Services
December, 2012

The Illinois Public Health Association wishes to express its strong support for the Early Childhood services and urges the Illinois General Assembly to restore the \$4.3 million cut from IDHS' early childhood programs supported by General Revenue, the \$392,000 cut from IDPH's early childhood programs supported by General Revenue and the \$25 million that was cut from the Early Childhood Block Grant last year.

The IDHS program affected by these reductions include Healthy Families Illinois (reduced by \$1.3 million), Family Case Management (reduced by \$1.9 million) and Parents Too Soon (reduced by \$1.0 million).

Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon are two of the three appropriations that support the state's system of home visiting programs. These services, along with the home visiting programs supported by the Early Childhood Block Grant, are the front line of the state's efforts to support families with young children who are at risk of child abuse and neglect.

The Family Case Management program is the state's effort to reduce infant mortality. Illinois' infant mortality rate still compares unfavorably with the nation¹ and African-American newborns in Illinois are still twice as likely as Caucasian or Latino newborns to die before their first birthday.

The IDPH programs affected by these reductions include expenses for the vital records system (\$192,000) and the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome program (eliminated by a reduction of \$200,000). The state's vital records system is a part of the data collection infrastructure required to measure our progress in the improvement of early childhood development. The Sudden Infant Death Syndrome program provided important support to families who have suffered the painful and unexpected loss of a infant.

The Illinois Public Health Association is Illinois' oldest and largest professional organization devoted exclusively to matters of public health. We have more than 7,000 members who are involved in every aspect of public health practice at the local and state levels, including early childhood development.

¹ Heisler, EJ. (2012). The U.S. Infant Mortality Rate: International Comparisons, Underlying Factors, and Federal Programs. Congressional Research Service, April 4, 2012. Figure 1, page 10.

Investments that nurture our community's children and families from the earliest days, months and years represents one of those upstream investments that could lead to Illinois becoming the healthiest state in the nation in one generation. These conclusions are supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Commission to Build a Healthier America (April 2009) by emphasizing that "...new resources must be directed to this goal even at the expense of other priorities..." This was further reinforced in March 2011 by the same organization suggesting that such interventions are "... probably the most effective strategy for realizing the health potential of all Americans." The American Academy of Pediatrics (January 2012) published both a policy statement and technical report suggesting, among other tenants, that..."disease prevention policies focused largely on adults would be more effective if evidence-based investments were also made to strengthen the foundations of health in the prenatal and early childhood periods." Most recently, the Institute of Medicine (July 2012) published the latest in a series of reports on opportunities and challenges influencing public health and our nation's health system (*Investing in a Healthier Future*). This report recommends a minimum package of public health services for all communities involving six foundational capabilities and six basic services, the latter starting with maternal and child health promotion.

The field and practice of public health has adopted a comprehensive definition of health: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This definition was adopted by the World Health Organization in 1946 and has not been modified since 1948. In practice, it means that public health endeavors encompass more than access to physical health care or the improvement of physical health. Instead, with regard to the practice of early child development, it encompasses efforts to improve all aspects of maternal, infant, child, adolescent and family development. The focus of public health efforts remains on the entire population: everyone is an "end user" of public health services.

Investment in early childhood development is a public health strategy. There is long-standing and increasingly strong evidence supporting the association of poor birth outcomes and adverse early life experiences with a whole range of health burdens throughout life. These include problems with mental, behavioral and physical development in children and hypertension, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, stroke, depression, addictive behavior and other behavioral health problems in adulthood. Our children's health is the future wealth of our society.

Local health departments have been providing preconceptional, prenatal and early childhood services and working with other providers of these services

at the community level for many years. The development of an effective and successful public health system and early childhood service system in a community requires the on-going collaboration of many partners. A child's social and emotional development is as much a public health concern as their physical health and well-being. Illinois' public health community will continue to stand in partnership with human service and education agencies in promoting the health of families with young children.

For example, Winnebago County Health Department's (WCHD) research substantiates that high-risk pregnant mothers can have birth outcomes as good as the community as a whole with the support of targeted intensive prenatal case management services (TIP). Winnebago County is one of seven downstate communities that have had IDHS funding, although declining, in recent years to target high-risk pregnancies with an enhanced frequency of face-to-face and home visiting services for the purpose of providing education and support for healthy birth outcomes and healthy infant growth and development. Poor birth outcomes (i.e. preterm and/or low birth weight infants) experience more frequent health complications and developmental difficulties that can lead to a range of physical, financial, emotional and social costs. Such outcomes can affect the mother, the baby, the family and the broader community.

WCHD evaluated a two year cohort of 267 high-risk pregnant moms served by the TIP program and found that such services improved medical care and birth outcomes for moms assessed with multiple risks for poor outcomes. Specifically these services increased client contacts (i.e. support), increased prenatal care visits and reduced low birth weight births when 7 or more client contacts are achieved. When 11 or more client contacts are achieved, these high-risk moms actually have birth outcomes comparable to the average for the community or a 55% improvement in achieving normal birth weight births. This research suggests a protective association from the increased number of client contacts with such improvements in comparison to high-risk moms who did not receive intensive prenatal case management services.

According to the latest census data, 40% of children in Illinois under age 6 are low-income (living at or below 185% of the federal poverty line). The achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers is apparent by 18 months of age. Fortunately, outcomes from high-quality early education programs show that this deficit can be overcome. This is shown in children entering kindergarten prepared to learn, increased high-school graduation rates, and increased college attendance. Studies also show early learning programs reduce the likelihood of students being placed in special education and becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

These benefits are even more significant when intervention begins before age 3 for at-risk infants, toddlers and their parents in home- and center-based programs. This is the right time to invest in prevention by investing in the health of families with young children.

The Illinois Public Health Association remains concerned about the fragmentation in leadership of the state's Maternal and Child Health program at the state level. Once a visible presence within the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Division of Community Health and Prevention, which led the state's efforts to improve the health of all women, infants, children, adolescents and children with special health care needs, has been merged into the former Division of Human Capital Development. This loss of public leadership and accountability must be reversed. The personnel, programs and resources of the former Division of Community Health and Prevention should be transferred to the Illinois Department of Public Health and a new, vital, comprehensive and effective state Maternal and Child Health program reestablished within that agency.

Although the state faces tremendous budget pressures, we must continue to invest in our youngest children if we want Illinois to have a job-ready workforce and a brighter economic future. What better place to invest than at the beginning with maternal, infant and early childhood community-based interventions in an integrated delivery system focused on a broad and integrated array of preventive health services as part of the continuum of the medical care home. Ultimately we achieve the outcomes we choose to invest in. It should start with the health of our children.

J. Maichle Bacon, President

Testimony for the ISBE, DHS, and DCFS Joint FY14 Early Childhood Budget Hearing
Submitted by Martin Torres, Senior Policy Analyst, Latino Policy Forum
December 3, 2012

Hello, my name is Martin Torres and I'm a senior policy analyst at the Latino Policy Forum. I am also an appointed member of the Illinois Early Learning Council and serve as co-chair of the Capital/Infrastructure subcommittee of the Family and Community Engagement Committee.

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago region that fosters Latino participation in statewide public policy discussions. We seek to inform, influence, and lead the public policy debate in the areas of early childhood education, housing, and immigration. We do so in partnership with Latino and other civic leaders in order to ensure the well being of our community and society as a whole.

The Forum urges the distinguished representatives of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to propose the restoration of funding for early care and education programs in each of your respective budgets. More specifically, we recommend the following:

- **Restore funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant in the ISBE budget by at least \$24.9 million to bring total spending to \$325,123,500.** It is vital that the state recommits to high-quality early childhood education, a proven intervention, by taking the fiscal steps necessary to expand services to the highest need children in the state.
- **Restore funding for bilingual education in the ISBE budget by at least \$7 million to bring total spending to \$70,381,200.** This recommendation reflects the restoration proposed by ISBE in its FY13 budget proposal. It is incumbent upon the state to support school districts as they strive to provide high quality supplemental education services to a growing population of English language learners (ELLs) beginning in preschool.
- **Restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program in the DHS budget by an amount sufficient to scale back the increase in parent co-payments initiated in FY13.** Changes in the pay scale have increased the cost of high-quality child care and as a result driven many children and their families out of licensed child care settings.
- **Maintain funding for the Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon home-visiting programs in the DHS budget. These programs were funded at and \$10,021,800 and \$6,870,300 respectively in FY13.** Failure to maintain the state's investment in these programs would trigger the loss of future funding and require the state to repay the federal government \$23.5 million due to maintenance of effort requirements associated with the Affordable Care Act.

ISBE - Preschool for All

Illinois' student demographics are rapidly changing. In 2000, Latino children accounted for 15% of the k-12 total student population. Today, Latino children account for 23% of the state's k-12 student population. What's more, Latino children currently account for 1-in-4 children under age five throughout the state. The ability of today's Latino students to succeed in tomorrow's workforce is contingent upon our ability to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed.

Unfortunately, research suggests that most Latino children enter kindergarten 6 months behind their peers academically. In Illinois, the achievement gap persists throughout children's educational careers as evidenced by test scores in math, reading, and science in 4th and 8th grade; ACT scores, high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and college completion rates. While data suggests that Latino children are making gains in many areas over time, only 62% are graduating from high school. That is unacceptable and Illinois can do better.

Access to early care and education is critical for Latino children and others who are at risk of poor school outcomes throughout their educational careers. While there is no panacea in education, access to high-quality, birth-to-five early childhood education has proven to positively alter the trajectory of children's educational careers. Furthermore, research conducted by University of Chicago Nobel Laureate James Heckman asserts that high quality early childhood programs can yield a 7-10% return on investment.

Regrettably, lawmakers have reduced the state's investment in the Early Childhood Block Grant by \$80 million since FY09. As a result, the Forum estimates that roughly 25,000 fewer children will have participated in state funded pre-k in FY13 compared to the number enrolled in FY09. These budget cuts have had a disproportionate effect on Latino children, who data suggest have the least access to early learning opportunities among all racial and ethnic groups in the state despite their growing share of the state's birth-to-five population (New Journalism on Latino Children, 2010).

Although lawmakers have scaled back their financial commitment to preschool services, the state has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to early care and education through a variety of initiatives. For example, the Governor's office, in coordination with the Illinois Capital Development Board, is in the final stages of decision-making associated with the state's \$45 million Early Childhood Construction Program. This competitive grant program will issue grants of up to \$5 million dollars to school districts or nonprofit early childhood providers for the construction, renovation, or expansion of facilities in order to increase access to high quality services in high-need areas of the state. Earlier this year, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development released descriptive information concerning applications for this program. Highlights of that information include the following:

- 227 applicants applied for the Early Childhood Construction Program
- Approximately \$540 million in total was requested from applicants, which is more than 10 times the amount of the resources available for this program
- More than half of Illinois 102 counties had at least 1 entity apply for funding, showing a significant statewide demand for improved early childhood infrastructure and access to high-quality services

In order for the state's Early Childhood Construction Program to be successful, lawmakers and state agency representatives must restore funding to the Early Childhood Block Grant and prioritize a segment of those resources for successful applicants over the next several fiscal cycles.

ISBE - Bilingual Education

In addition to advancements in early childhood education, Illinois has enacted a series of reforms aimed at improving access to high-quality bilingual education for limited English proficient (LEP) students.

In 2011, the legislature passed HB181, now P.A. 097-0324, which eliminated the automatic set-aside of funding for Chicago Public Schools (CPS). CPS must now submit a claim for a reimbursement under the same parameters as every other district in the state. This provides for a more equitable distribution of bilingual education funding statewide, which is tremendously important given the increase in LEP students in suburban municipalities and other regions throughout the state.

In addition, Illinois recently became the first state in the nation to require bilingual educational services for eligible children participating in school district-administered preschool programs that serve at least 20 children who share a native language other than English.

These positive developments must be leveraged by a restoration of funding to support bilingual education beginning at age 3. Unfortunately, the current appropriation level represents the state's lowest investment in bilingual education in 8 years. This must change if Illinois is going to equip school districts with the resources necessary to provide appropriate bilingual education services to children beginning in preschool. Enrollment data provided to us by the early childhood division at ISBE shows that more than 12,000 preschool children were identified as LEP in 2011 – that's 15% of all children enrolled that year. More robust screening and language assessments may yield an even greater number of LEP students in the years ahead.

DHS – Child Care Assistance Program

Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is a vital component of the state's early learning infrastructure. This program provides a necessary means for low-income parents, particularly single mothers, to obtain high-quality care for their children while they work or pursue additional education. As the number of children in Illinois living in poverty continues to climb, so does the need to provide early learning supports to our state's youngest children.

Despite the importance of this program, CCAP has experienced a variety of funding shortfalls over the past few years. In FY12, the program required an emergency supplemental appropriation in order to maintain services during the closing months of the fiscal year. In FY13, the reduction in resources caused DHS to increase parent co-payments. While additional changes to the program were averted in FY13, CCAP remains a program that is severely underfunded. Rather

than initiating long-term adjustments to the program that would increase its effectiveness and utility for parents, such as developing an assisted phase out procedure for participants whose salary increases make them ineligible for services at redetermination, state leaders are trying to figure out how to do more with less.

Budget cuts that diminish families' ability to participate in CCAP not only limit children's access to quality child care, but in many cases restricts their ability to participate in Preschool for All (PFA) as well. When working parents are no longer able to consume a full day's worth of early care and education for their children because they've been priced out of CCAP, many are forced to take their kids out of PFA because it is only a 2.5 hour program and it is difficult to arrange for transportation and alternative arrangements for their children on a daily basis. As such, high-need children and their families sometimes suffer the loss of both programs. Given the joint nature of this budget hearing, state leaders recognize the interconnectedness of Illinois' early learning programs. Moving forward, state leaders must continue exploring strategies to help families and providers navigate difficult circumstances such as these.

As fiscal planning is conducted at DHS, we are confident that administrators will seek out an appropriate balance between the need to overcome fiscal challenges and the responsibility to maintain an effective structure of services.

DHS – Home-Visiting Programs

It is also critical for the state to maintain its investment in home-visiting programs. Nobel Laureate James Heckman's work also suggests that early childhood programs targeted towards children's earliest years, e.g. birth-to-three services, have a much larger return on investment than other interventions children may experience throughout their youth. Strengthening parents' tendencies through the lessons, tools, and guidance provided in home-visiting programs enriches children's lives and better prepares them for participation in preschool and beyond. The Forum strongly urges the state to maintain its current level of investment in home-visiting programs, thereby taking advantage of federal resources made available through the Affordable Care Act and protecting services to vulnerable children.

In closing, the Latino Policy Forum strongly urges representatives from ISBE and DHS to work with the Governor's office and members of the 98th Illinois General Assembly to prioritize funding for early care and education in the FY14 budget. Illinois' investment in the development of its youngest children and most vulnerable families can no longer be sacrificed in order to adhere to the constraints associated with a difficult fiscal climate. State lawmakers must better utilize their Budgeting for Results framework in order to ensure that effective programs widely known for yielding a positive return on investment are not decimated during the budget process.

While the Latino Policy Forum is actively engaging in the legislative processes associated with the development of the annual budget, the organization is also an active advocate on the revenue side of the ledger as well. The Forum looks forward to working with lawmakers in the years ahead to ensure that Illinois' tax system is fair, equitable, and built to respond to the fiscal needs of the state.

Thank you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email at mtorres@latinopolicyforum.org or over the phone at (312) 376-1766 ext. 222.

Loop Learning Center testimony

Child care is an early intervention that provide at-risk children with a structured and nurturing environment that most of them may not be exposed to at home. Some children in less educated households are more likely to be exposed to poor parenting, poverty, and possibly low levels or no stimulation, dysfunctional and disorganized home. These factors can all contribute to problems that children experience in school as well as in their environment which could also carry over into adulthood.

I read in "Time" magazine that for every one dollar spent on quality child care, society saves \$2.50. This savings were attributed to fewer developmental delays in school, less need for special education and fewer children having to repeat grades. Therefore it makes economic sense to invest dollars into child care for at-risk children and their families.

We have to re-shape they way we look at the child care industry. Placing at-risk children in a quality child care environment, in many ways, provide structure, foster developmental growth and are necessary for the preparation of school. Unfortunately, these at-risk children are the lease likely to receive child care before they enter in kindergarten putting them at a disadvantage for a success in life overall.

I feel that if the government doesn't consider all the long term benefits that quality child care provide to our children and support the child care industry, we are going to definitely pay for it later when our young at-risk children experience difficulties socially interacting with their peers, and other adults as well as managing their own behavior. Their cognitive development may suffer hindering their ability to learn, reason, problem solve, think, respond, and use strategies for acquiring knowledge. They may also experience physical and mental delays due to lack of positive stimulation and healthy nutrition. This only adds up to more tax dollars spent for problems you could have help with and/or corrected in the beginning.

I say to our governor "**let's take a stand**" to continue to provide our at-risk children and families with the necessary developmental tools they need to be active and positive contributors of society. The children are our future and if we don't prepare them what hope does that leave for us. As a parent and family support educator, I plead that you don't cut the budget for day cares.

Our children and families depend greatly on these services.

Sincerely,

*Donna Porter
Family Support Specialist
Loop Learning Center
2001 S. Michigan Avenue*

Testimony of Metropolitan Family Services Joint ISBE/DHS/DCFS Early Childhood Budget Hearing

December 3, 2012

Speakers: Nadia Miranda, Chicago Head Start parent and member of MFS Board of Directors
Janet Bielat, Head Start Teacher, Metropolitan Family Services - DuPage

Nadia Miranda: Parent and MFS Board Member

Good morning. I am Nadia Miranda, proud mother of two little girls, Natalia and Valeria. My 5 year-old, Natalia, is at the Metropolitan Family Services Head Start site on Chicago's Southwest Side. My 6 year old Valeria was also in this program, and is now in 1st grade at the STEM Magnet Academy.

I am here both as a parent and as a member of the Metropolitan Family Services Board of Directors. With me is Janet Beilat, a teacher in our DuPage County Head Start program, who will share information about the growing needs of young children in the DuPage area. Janet and I have different stories, but there are three common themes we want to stress as you think about early childhood budget decisions:

1. **To young children, the family is what matters most.** We cannot separate the needs of young children from the needs of the families who care for them. All of the systems and agencies that support children and families are part of the same big picture.
2. **Early learning is part of our state infrastructure, and an investment that pays off.** We know early childhood programs contribute to better learning, safer communities and economic success. We need to invest in invest in young children just as we invest in safe roads and clean water.
3. **We are falling behind in meeting the needs of young children.** Illinois cannot succeed as a state if thousands of children lack access to early learning. We need to spend every dollar where it is needed most. The first step is to restore cuts that have left even more children behind.

Background: How Metropolitan Family Services support for Young Children and Families

Metropolitan Family Services has been generating hope and opportunity for low-income families in the Chicago area since 1857. We touch every stage of family life – from birth to the senior years – with services to foster Educational Success, Economic Stability, Emotional Wellness and Empowerment. Last year, MFS served 53,000 people in Chicago and suburban Cook and DuPage counties.

In Chicago, MFS operates three early learning centers serving 258 children on the Southwest Side and in Belmont-Cragin on the North Side. In addition to center-based care for preschool age children, we serve infants and toddlers and their parents through Healthy Families and Prevention Initiative programs, as well as a range of other school-based programs, counseling services, parent programs. Some combination of these services can be found in all of our communities, which include Southeast Chicago, Midway area, Calumet/Roseland, the Northwest Side and parts of suburban Cook County.

Similarly, Metropolitan Family Services DuPage offers a range of services for children and families, including Parents as Teachers, school-based services, Adoption Preservation and parent development. In May, MFS became the federal grantee for Head Start and early Head Start. When all sites are operational, we will provide Head Start to 529 3- to 5-year olds and Early Head Start to 100 infants & toddlers. These services will be provided in sites directly operated by MFS, in partnership with school districts, and by a delegate agreement with the new Educare Center in West DuPage.

Our work is supported all three state agencies participating in this hearing, and include direct contracts with each department, participation in federal programs administered by the state, and agreements with local agencies that administer state early childhood funds. We access Head Start funds through the City of Chicago and directly from the Department of Health and Human Services in DuPage County. We also aggressively raise private funds to complement our public partnerships.

A Chicago Parent Perspective

As a mom, I see how every part of our family life affects my girls. To my little ones, the family *is* the world. The needs of children and their families cannot be separated. It is good to see three state departments think about these issues together.

My world changed when I become a mother. The first time I held my oldest daughter, it was like a light switch was flipped on. I realized that she knew nothing about the world, and most of what she would learn she would first learn from me. It was like she was Play-doh, and my job was to help her learn and shape her into a great human being. That shaping starts in the home, before preschool.

Every parent wants a better life for their children. But like many parents, I had challenges that I did not know how to address, or even where to start. My first contact with Metropolitan Family Services was not about early childhood, but to get help with issues in my marriage, and later for support as I went through a divorce. Asking for help was difficult, but it allowed me to get stronger and learn how to provide my daughters with a home environment that would help them grow.

As Valeria got older, I knew she needed child care to foster her learning and provide a solid foundation to become a productive member of society. I had been a West Lawn resident for 12 years, and knew there was a shortage of early childhood services. But I had no idea how hard the search would be , especially because I wanted a quality program, and could not afford private child care.

We waited one long year for a space for Valeria in the MFS program. When Natalia's time came, she was given priority on the waiting list because her sister was already in the program, but even then, the wait was excruciating. I am so grateful it worked out, because Metropolitan has a quality program. The teachers are committed and really go out of their way for families, and we have active parents who get involved.

My daughters do well, because the program is strong. Last year, children in MFS programs saw gains of 7.3% in Social Emotional Development, 7.6% in Cognitive Development, 8.3% in Literacy Development, and 7.7% in Mathematics Development. Our parents know how to help their children learn: 78% of our parents read to their children at least 5 times a week.

I have nothing but gratitude for the experiences that are giving my children a brighter tomorrow. Early childhood education is the best gift we can give our children. It is a long-term investment in our communities, and a weapon against violence and negative life cycles.

Every child should have these opportunities. We have a long way to go, and the last few years it seems like we are falling behind.

- Since 2009, thousands of children have lost access to early learning, due to cuts to Preschool for All. This needs to change. Restoring the \$25 million cut last year would be a good first step.
- Bilingual funding does not cover the costs of what state law says English Language Learners need. At minimum, we need to put back enough funding to do what the law requires.
- Working parents need full-day care, but can easily lose their subsidy if they make a bit more money or the eligibility requirements change, which was a big scare last spring. No parent should have to turn down a raise they desperately need just to keep their child care.
- The lack of facilities is a huge barrier, especially in Latino areas like the Southwest Side. Just in Brighton Park, Chicago Lawn and Gage Park, there are nearly 10,000 low-income children who do not get services because the facilities do not exist.
- None of the \$45 million recently awarded to build early childhood facilities went to these neighborhoods, which are 1st, 4th and 7th for need in Chicago. Our neighborhood is not alone. Early childhood facilities must become a much higher priority for capital funding.
- Cuts to state agencies are placing huge burdens on committed professional who are trying to meet important responsibilities. We know it takes staff and resources to do any job. We need to support the state agencies that support children and families.
- Providers need to be paid to stay in business. We saw what happened to Hull House last year. Many other providers are in the same board. MFS alone is owed more than \$2 million dollars.

All three state agencies are important to early learning and to families. We are grateful that you are thinking about the issues together, and thank you for the opportunity to share our ideas and concerns.

Janet Bielat - DuPage Head Start Teacher

My name is Janet Bielat, and I work as a floating teacher for Metropolitan Family Services Head Start in DuPage County. While I am new with Metropolitan, I have been an early childhood teacher in DuPage for nearly 30 years, and with Head Start for 23 years. After the turnover in DuPage Head Start programs the past few years, it is good to have the stability of an agency like Metropolitan, which brings resources to help families in many different ways.

Head Start is only part of the early childhood landscape in DuPage. We need to look at the entire picture of need, which has grown faster than any one program can address. When I started my

career, we ran nine classrooms serving about two hundred kids. Needs have grown, especially over the last especially over the past decade, and so have we. When the current Head Start and Early Head Start grants are fully up and running, we will reach 529 children through Head Start and 100 through early Head Start. We are working with school districts to offer programs in their buildings, and a new Educare facility that will provide the full wrap-around services so many families need.

As a whole, DuPage County remains comparatively affluent compared to Cook County and other parts of the state. But the bigger picture is more complicated – and far from rosy for the many more low income families who now live in our county. Here are a few facts that illustrate the challenges facing the DuPage early learning community:

DuPage is now home to the state's second largest largest low-income population, behind Cook County. Both the number and percentage of low-income and working poor families in DuPage County have more than doubled since 1990, according to census data. That means that:

DuPage now has 60,000 people at or below the federal poverty line of \$22,050 for a family of four. That is an increase of 130%.

When you factor in the “working poor” estimated at \$44,100 or less for a family of poor, the number jumps to just over 160,000. For early childhood, this population is a challenge because these are the families whose access to state Pre-K and child care subsidies is most precarious. You can't work if you don't have child care, or if the cost of child care makes working unaffordable.

It is a double edged sword that I have seen in my own family. My daughter pays \$22,000 a year for child care, and earns about \$35,000. For her family, they make it work, and so she is able to contribute to the economy as a taxpayer. For many families, it just doesn't pan out.

Poverty in DuPage County tends to be concentrated in pockets. Since Head Start is income based, we tend to be located in those areas. But are we really reaching the entire need?

While we are proud to be working with school districts across the county, Head Start cannot be considered an offset to the hundreds of Pre-K slots DuPage County has lost over the past several years. Both programs are needed, because needs are growing and resources are more scarce.

DuPage has also become substantially more diverse. In 1980, the county was 92% White. By 2010, DuPage was 70% white, 13% Latino, 10% Asian, 4% African American, and 2% other.

Over 25% of our households speak a language other than English at home, and 10% report they do not speak English well. Spanish is the most common non-English language, but we have large numbers of Polish speakers, and sizeable groups who speak different Asian languages.

In a world that is more global, diversity can and should be an asset. But since language is a key factor in school success, capturing the value of diversity means we must address the needs of young children who are learning a new language or do not have many opportunities to practice at

home. That is why language factors are frequently used to determine eligibility for services. But without enough Pre-K and Head Start slots to go around, language can become another unmet need. In a global world, early childhood can be an investment that makes a difference by building on the assets of our people. But only if we decide to make it.

The information I am sharing is not new and or really surprising – DuPage County is changing because our society is changing. Our families have been hit by a hard economy just as families everywhere have. As a veteran early childhood educator, the facts simply reinforce what I and my colleagues see every day. Need has grown faster than our ability to address it.

I believe as Nadia does that whenever and wherever young children have needs, we have a duty to address them in ways that make a difference.

As early childhood professionals, we appreciate the different strengths and qualities of Head Start, Early Head Start and similar state funded programs. To families, those differences don't always mean much.

What matters to them is access to good services, and meeting the needs of their children in challenging times. The decrease in preschool funding and the waiting lists for our Head Start programs show that we simply need to do more.

I will finish by returning to the three themes that cut across all of our programs.

One - The needs of children and their families are bigger than any one program or funding stream. We need to consider them as a whole. We applaud you for taking this step forward today.

Two – We know quality early childhood works, and need to think of it as part of the infrastructure that our state needs to invest in to move forward; and

Three- We cannot fall behind in early learning and still be a leader. We need to meet the needs where they are, and think long-term about how early childhood can support our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

**Ounce of Prevention Fund Testimony
Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
DHS, DCFS and ISBE
December 3, 2012**

Introduction

Good morning, I am Nancy Radner, Director of Illinois Policy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at this very important budget hearing. We are grateful for the continued emphasis on early childhood by these three agencies and for the fact that you are doing this jointly, in recognition that the needs of early childhood require an integrated approach.

It is the vision of the Ounce of Prevention Fund that high quality early childhood programming, beginning at birth, be an integral part of our nation's education and human service systems. By meeting our children's cognitive and social-emotional needs early on, we can close the achievement gap and ensure children are successful in school and in life. Investing in early childhood is one of the most effective uses of public funds in terms of long-term costs savings and also provides short-term cost savings for local school districts. We simply can't afford not to invest.

Far too many children in Illinois face significant hurdles to school readiness. Forty percent of young children in Illinois live in low-income households (185% of the federal poverty line), and an increasing number of Preschool for All students are English Language Learners (approximately 16% in FY2012). Given these facts, investing in programs for young, at-risk children to make sure they get the right start in life and school is more critical now than ever. Yet our state has done exactly the opposite.

Request of Illinois Department of Human Services

Home Visiting

Illinois has benefitted from the Affordable Care Act through \$23.5 million in federal home visiting, or MIECHV funds. Home visiting is a key early childhood program for over 5,000 Illinois children each year, with a proven track record of improving child health outcomes and school readiness and reducing incidences of child maltreatment. In order to maintain this federal funding, MIECHV requires that states maintain effort from the date the Affordable Care Act was passed. Any cut in these funds triggers a repayment of the \$23.5 million plus jeopardizes the likely future funding of another \$8 million. **Therefore we request maintenance level funding for FY14 for Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon.**

Child Care Assistance Program

Fifty percent of the children served in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are under five years of age, making the CCAP a critical component of Illinois' early childhood system. Budget constraints over the past few years have made it more difficult for families to afford high-quality care and to gain initial entry into the system. Additional quality improvements cannot be implemented without additional funding. It is imperative no further ground is lost in the CCAP. **Therefore we request, at a minimum, maintenance level funding for FY14 and consideration of possible growth to a path of improved quality and access for low-income children.**

Request of Illinois State Board of Education

The Ounce greatly appreciates the State Board of Education's efforts to protect and grow funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant through its proposed budget and efforts with the legislature over the last few years. However, the Early Childhood Block Grant has been cut by \$80 million since FY2009 and 22,000 children have lost access to preschool. Even before these cuts, many families were unable to find or afford a quality preschool program. And resources for at-risk infants, toddlers and their families (currently 14% of the Early Childhood Block Grant for center- and home-based services) have always been significantly underfunded.

We request that the Illinois State Board of Education include the following in its FY14 proposed budget:

1. At a minimum, **\$325 million for the Early Childhood Block Grant**, which would restore the \$25 million cut from the Early Childhood Block Grant in last year's budget, and return to a path toward Preschool for All.
2. At a minimum, **\$70 million for Bilingual Education**, which is a \$7 million restoration from last year and was ISBE's recommendation to the General Assembly in FY13, in order to ensure that preschool children receive the services they are entitled to by statute.
3. Provide funding to support the **Kindergarten Individual Development Survey** from other ISBE budget lines, such as Assessments, rather than from the already-reduced Early Childhood Block Grant, to reflect the integration of early learning into the K-12 continuum.

Special Education in Early Childhood – Connecting DHS, ISBE and DCFS

Special education is an area where coordination between DHS, ISBE and DCFS is critical. One example is those children birth to age five who were referred for an evaluation but found ineligible for special education. There are thousands of these children each year, but no system exists to track them to determine if they show up later in special education or if they were able to develop appropriately without intervention. What this means, then, is that we have no way to determine if the state's eligibility criteria is effective. The earlier we find these children and intervene, the better it is for their school outcomes and the more cost-effective it is for the state. Therefore, ISBE, DHS and DCFS need to collect and track data on these children and use it to make informed decisions about early intervention and special education.

To administer this, **a first step is for DHS to continue to move forward with the web-based data system for Early Intervention** that was recommended by the Early Intervention Taskforce. DHS did accept this recommendation, now it just needs to be budgeted and implemented.

Also, as we move forward in setting next year's budget, we urge that representatives of all three agencies speak out strongly to members of the General Assembly regarding the budget process it plans to use in the upcoming spring session. The process should be further refined to ensure that the principles of Budgeting for Results are being employed, and priorities and outcomes are considered.

Outcomes, Measures and the Value of Early Childhood Investment

Research demonstrates that investing in early childhood is one of the most cost-effective investments we can make because these investments produce a host of outcomes that help ensure children are successful in school and life. These outcomes include increased kindergarten readiness, high school graduation rates and college attendance, and reduced special education rates. Longitudinal research on preschool programs shows these outcomes also extend far beyond the classroom, such as reduced rates of criminal justice system involvement and higher lifetime earnings. Early childhood research from leading economists, including Professor James Heckman from the University of Chicago, has shown that every dollar spent on high-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children creates \$7 to \$9 in future savings.

With regard to Illinois' programs, an evaluation of Illinois' Preschool for All program by the Erikson Institute and SRI International found that children in Preschool for All programs showed improvement in school readiness, with the most promising results demonstrated for low-income and at-risk children. Further, a report from Wilder Research found that Illinois' early childhood investments provide an estimated \$353-\$530 million in annual savings and revenue to the state, including \$27-\$40 million in savings in K-12 education through reduced spending on special education, repeated grades, and reduced costs traced to lower teacher turnover as fewer teachers leave jobs due to dissatisfaction with working conditions related to poor student behavior or lack of school readiness.

Moving Forward in Early Childhood

Despite the fact that early childhood funding has been dramatically reduced over the last several years, important improvements to our early childhood system are moving forward, due in part to the state's efforts to secure Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds. Illinois has implemented revised preschool learning standards, drafted early learning standards for infants and toddlers and is currently piloting the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey to better assess students' competencies across developmental domains. Further, through the recently submitted Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Round 2 application, the state has committed to several key quality improvement initiatives, including:

- A new Quality Rating and Improvement System that will include all providers serving children in groups across settings and funding streams.
- The integration of statewide data systems to track services received, child outcomes, program quality and early childhood educator credentials.
- A comprehensive statewide professional development plan for early childhood educators, including improved attention to the critical areas of early math, supporting English language learners, and the use of assessment and standards to drive instruction.

Thank you for your consideration. The Ounce of Prevention looks forward to continuing to partner with all three of your agencies throughout the budgeting process and upcoming legislative session to ensure that we restore critical funds and maintain our commitment to our state's children and future.

ISBE Budget Hearing – Testimony on behalf of POWER-PAC - 11/16/2012

My name is Treyonda Towns. I am a mother and grandmother from the East Garfield Park community. I am a member of POWER-PAC, which stands for Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew, Policy Action Council. We are a citywide organization of Latino and African-American parents coming together across culture and community to create positive change for our families.

We are here today because this budget affects our children and families, as well as every family in the state. We are here to ask you to restore the \$25 million that was cut from the Early Childhood Block Grant by the General Assembly. POWER-PAC has been working for 9 years to interrupt the cradle-to-prison pipeline. This pipeline is created when we don't give our young ones the support and resources they need to succeed. One of the most important things we can do to stop this cradle-to-prison pipeline is to invest in early childhood education.

Everyone knows how important early education is. Research shows that low-income children in particular do better in school and in life when they benefit from preschool or an early learning program. As parents and as leaders in our communities, we see the difference that early education makes every day. It's especially important for the families that face extra challenges, such as grandparents raising grandchildren, teen mothers, homeless families, and immigrant families.

In Chicago POWER-PAC has been working hard with all stakeholders to improve the quality and access to early learning. We won a big victory in August when Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the city would add at least 2,000 spots this year and more in the future. But that progress would be undermined if the state cuts funding again. Because of cuts to the Early Childhood Block Grant, over 20,000 Illinois children have already lost access to preschool.

Something is wrong when we can find money to lock up youth in juvenile detention, but can't find enough funds to put all our children into preschool. We should invest in them when they are young, because it pays off in the long run. Not just in dollars and cents, but in their lives and our communities. As Mayor Emanuel said in August, we can't make budget decisions "on the backs of our children."

Everyone knows that Illinois has financial challenges. We know that ISBE has advocated for increased education funding. But POWER-PAC asks you to make our young ones from zero to 5 a priority by restoring the \$25 million to the Early Childhood Block Grant.

Putnam County Primary School
Testimony for the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
Monday, December 3, 2012

Our Preschool program has been in existence since 1985. I have been the Parent Coordinator/Program Coordinator since 1998. We have not been fully funded since I started here until Fiscal Year 11.

When programs got cut for the 2011-2012 school year, everyone was on pins and needles. Then this school year our money got cut. It is very difficult to run a quality preschool program while worried about how to fund the program or the program being cut. According to research we know that Birth to 5 are critical years for brain development as well as development as a whole. Illinois will need to continue funding early childhood programs to prepare at-risk students for success in school. Sustaining or increasing the funding for early childhood programs will also realize savings, revenues and economic benefits for the state and public. It is estimated that fully funding the Illinois Preschool for All Grants to all eligible 3 to 5-year olds will cost about \$285 million. Offsetting this cost would be the savings realized by schools, taxpayers, and the public. If Illinois were to discontinue or reduce funding early childhood programs, not only would the children of Illinois suffer, but the Illinois budget and economy would suffer as well.

Early Childhood Fast Facts

- By the time a child is 6, the brain is 90-95% of its adult size. (Wallis, Claudia, "What Makes teens Tick," Time, 2004).
- Scientists have learned that different regions of the cortex increase in size when they are exposed to stimulating conditions, and the longer the exposure, the more they grow. Research shows an enriched environment can boost the number of synapses that children form. (Shore, Rima, Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development, Families and Work Institute, 1997).
- Brain imaging through the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) is increasingly allowing researchers to see what areas of the brain are working when children are performing tasks such as reading and speech. (Windham, Christopher, "Brain Imaging Provides a Window on Speech and Learning Problems," The Wall Street Journal, 2004).
- The most rapid brain growth occurs in the first three years of a child's life. By age three, a child's brain has formed twice as many connections as an adult's brain. By early adolescence, the brain is eliminating more synapses than it is producing. By late adolescence, half of the synapses have been discarded. This number remains relatively constant through the rest of the life cycle. (Shore, Rima, Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development, Families and Work Institute, 1997).
- The Perry Preschool Study has tracked their program for 40 years and reports at \$16.14 return for every dollar invested. (constant 2000 dollars) (High Scope Educational Research Foundation, The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40, 2005)

An estimated 4,470 adults, age 18 to 29, would have dropped out of school had Illinois not funded early childhood education. The impact is approximately \$72 million annually in increases wages and tax revenues. (Wilder Research, Cost savings analysis of school readiness in Illinois, May 2011)

- Research shows the achievement gap appears before kindergarten.
At-risk students are: 25% more likely to drop out of school
40% more likely to become a teen parent
50% more likely to be place in special education
60% more likely to never attend college
70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.(Ounce of Prevention)
- Researchers estimate children in professional families hear 11 million words per year, in working class families children hear 6 million words per year, and in families receiving public assistance children hear 3 million words per year. (Hart & Risley, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children, 1995)

With all the research that is out, there seems to be a simple solution: fund early childhood programs fully and open more classrooms so we can truly have Preschool for All!



SEIU Healthcare[®]

United for Quality Care

Keith Kelleher
President

April Verrett
Executive Vice-President

Myra Glassman
Chief of Staff
Secretary-Treasurer

Vice Presidents:

Jaquie Algee
Erica Bland
Felecia Bryant
Anthony Guest
Alex Han
Terri Harkin
Greg Kelley
Maggie Laslo
Paula Richard
Brynn Seibert
EJ Serrano

Board Chair:
Flora Johnson

Vice-Chairs:

Faith Arnold
Bernita Drayton
Francine Rico
Alberta Walker

Illinois

209 W. Jackson Blvd
Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312.980.9000
Fax: 312.939.8256

Indiana

1800 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
Phone: 317.927.9691

Missouri

5585 Pershing Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63112
Phone: 314.533.3633

www.seiuhealthcareill.in.org

Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing

Monday, December 3, 2012

Written testimony submitted by: SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana

SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana represents over 85,000 health care and child care workers throughout the state, including 35,000 workers in the child care and early learning industry. Our child care members work in licensed home, license-exempt home, and licensed center settings.

We are encouraged to see ISBE, DHS, and DCFS working together put forward budget proposals related to Early Childhood Education, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this collaborative group for this joint budget hearing. We are submitting this written testimony today to encourage you to protect the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The CCAP is an essential program in Illinois, creating affordable child care options for more than 150,000 children from low-income families, setting the stage for children’s future success as well as having a significant impact on the Illinois economy.

The CCAP has already made significant programmatic changes over the last two years to reduce spending, including increasing parent co-payments and reducing income eligibility, and cannot afford to, at the very minimum, spend less than we currently are spending without significantly reducing both quality of and access to child care and early learning programs for the families who need them most. Budget cuts to child care and early learning have already had a negative impact on the program, and we have already seen a significant reduction of children in the program.

The Child Care Assistance Program serves two vital functions:

1. CCAP supports qualifying low-income families by providing child care subsidies to parents with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, allowing them to maintain employment and/or further their education, thereby decreasing future dependence on public assistance.
2. CCAP allows families to access multiple options for affordable and quality child care, early education and after-school programs that offer children the opportunity to grow, learn and be cared for in safe, nurturing settings that are culturally and developmentally appropriate.



SEIUHealthcare[®] United for Quality Care

Keith Kelleher
President

April Verrett
Executive Vice-President

Myra Glassman
Chief of Staff
Secretary-Treasurer

Vice Presidents:

Jaquie Algee
Erica Bland
Felecia Bryant
Anthony Guest
Alex Han
Terri Harkin
Greg Kelley
Maggie Laslo
Paula Richard
Brynn Seibert
EJ Serrano

Board Chair:
Flora Johnson

Vice-Chairs:
Faith Arnold
Bernita Drayton
Francine Rico
Alberta Walker

Illinois
209 W. Jackson Blvd
Suite 200
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312.980.9000
Fax: 312.939.8256

Indiana
1800 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
Phone: 317.927.9691

Missouri
5585 Pershing Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63112
Phone: 314.533.3633

www.seiuhealthcareilln.org

Underfunding the program undermines those vital functions. There is no doubt that not fully funding the CCAP will prove to be detrimental to thousands of Illinois families. Affordable, quality child care is crucial for working parents who cannot afford to stay at home nor, without the assistance of CCAP, afford stable, quality care and early education for their children. Without child care assistance the jobs and livelihoods of low-income families are jeopardized. We cannot allow this to happen.

Additionally, the Child Care Assistance Program is essential for the growth and development of children who otherwise would not have access to early education. Research shows that investing in quality early childhood education brings one of the greatest returns on human capital of any government program. Economics professor James Heckman asserts that, “investing in early childhood development for disadvantaged children provides a high return on investment to society through increased personal achievement and social productivity.” Dr. Heckman advances that programs targeted towards the youngest children are the best investment of any educational program, including pre-school, school, and post-school programs.¹

In closing, we urge you to protect Illinois’ budget for the Child Care Assistance Program. The Child Care Assistance Program assures that all of Illinois’ children have access to affordable and quality child care. But in addition to supplying our children with the care and social, emotional, and cognitive development that they need to grow up and be productive citizens, the Child Care Assistance Program also positively supports and enhances Illinois’ economy in ways that go beyond helping children and parents by generating thousands of jobs. It is a wise investment for both the short and long term for the social and economic health of our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Heckman, James, Investments in Early Childhood Education as a Means for Deficit Reduction in Illinois (2010)

The Children's Center of Cicero-Berwyn

I am writing on behalf of all the families in Cicero and Berwyn that we serve. It would be a hardship to so many of our families if our early childhood programs are cut. We have worked so hard to prepare children for pre-k, kindergarten, and beyond over the past 35 years. So many graduates have come back to share their early childhood memories and how it prepared them for future success. Elementary teachers have shared their gratitude for their students being prepared for kindergarten and socialization skills with their peers.

With so much pressure on students these days, it is so important that they get a head start to learning. The children and families need your help and support! Please consider the importance of early childhood education and the future success of our children. Thank you.

Lurlean Chodora

Executive Director

The Children's Center of Cicero-Berwyn

5341 W. Cermak Road, Cicero, IL 60804

708-652-3377 | fax: 708-222-9984

l.chodora@childrenscenterciceroberwyn.org

www.childrenscenterciceroberwyn.org



Through A Child's Eyes Pre-K Program
5310 W. 24th Place Cicero, IL 60804 Phone: (708) 222-1077

Testimony: For the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14 – Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Family Services and State Board of Education which will be chaired by Gery Chico, Chairman, Illinois State Board of Education scheduled for 12-3-12

Submitted by Bob Cammarata, Director, Through A Child's Eyes
Date: 11-30-12

Though I am not able to attend the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14 scheduled for 12-3-12 involving the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children and Family Services and the State Board of Education which will be chaired by Gery Chico, Chairman, Illinois State Board of Education, I wanted to provide this testimony regarding the Early Childhood Budget for FY 14.

Through A Child's Eyes Pre-Kindergarten program is funded through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to provide Preschool for All/Pre-Kindergarten program services to 400 children, three through five years of age, who reside in Cicero. All of the children served in our Pre-Kindergarten Program are children that have been determined to meet the first mandated priority of the Illinois legislature for Preschool for All/Pre-Kindergarten funding - children who have been identified/determined to be at-risk of academic failure. This is the eighth year that Through A Child's Eyes has provided Pre-Kindergarten program services.

Through A Child's Eyes Pre-Kindergarten Program has a current Child Care Center license issued by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and successfully attained accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in January 2010.

Through A Child's Eyes is an active member of the Latino Policy Forum's early childhood education *Acuerdo*, a network of Latino-serving early childhood providers working together to increase access to high-quality, birth-to-five, early learning opportunities that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for Latino children.

Through A Child's Eyes urges the distinguished members of this Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14, specifically ISBE and DHS, to restore funding for early care

and education programs in each of their respective budgets. Specifically, we recommend the following:

That ISBE should

- **Restore funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant in the ISBE budget by at least \$24.9 million to bring the total allocation for the Early Childhood Block Grant to \$325,123,500.**

It is vital that the state recommits to high-quality early childhood education, a proven intervention, by taking the fiscal steps necessary to begin the positive movement toward implementing Preschool for All in Illinois.

In FY 09 the early childhood education allocation was \$380 million. Since then there has been steady reductions in the allocation for early childhood education. The result of the budget reductions has been that state wide there has been an estimated decrease of 17,000 early childhood education capacities in Illinois.

- **Restore bilingual education in the ISBE budget by at least \$7 million to bring the total spending to \$70,381,200.**

It is incumbent upon the state to support school districts as they strive to provide high quality supplemental education services to a growing population of English language learners (ELLs) beginning schools.

In that we provide Pre-Kindergarten services to a significant number of English language learners (ELLs) in our program, the ability to implement ISBE's planned sharing of the local school's districts bilingual education services funds for use at the Pre-K level is of prime concern for us. If bilingual education services funds are not made available to the local school district those funds will then not be available for sharing at the Pre-K level. The restoration of bilingual education funding should allow for the implementation of ISBE's planned sharing of the local school's districts bilingual education services funds for use at the Pre-K level.

The Illinois legislature in their 2014 mandate required new certifications/endorsements for teachers of English language learners (ELLs). The restoration of the funding for bilingual education will assist us to meet the challenges to implement the new certifications/endorsements requirements for teachers of English language learners (ELLs) as required by Illinois legislature.

- **Be prepared to allocate sufficient additional recourses into the Early Childhood Block Grant to respond accordingly to the unprecedented positive action of the legislature to fund an Early Childhood Construction Grant Program.**

The ultimate success of this unprecedented Early Childhood Construction Grant program rests upon the ability of those agencies, that are awarded this Grant, to increase access to high quality early learning programs for children at risk in high – need areas.

It would be extremely detrimental to Illinois if the needed additional resources were not provided by ISBE given the unique opportunity that was provided by Illinois legislature to increase the availability of services through its own Early Childhood Capital Development Construction grant program.

That DHS should

- **Maintain funding for the Early Intervention program in the DHS budget.**
- **Restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program in the DHS budget by an amount sufficient to scale back the increased parent co-payment initiated in FY 13.**

Changes in the pay scale have driven many families out of licensed child care.

- **Be prepared to allocate sufficient additional resources into the Child Care Assistance program to respond accordingly to the unprecedented positive action of the legislature to fund an Early Childhood Construction Grant Program.**

The ultimate success of this unprecedented Early Childhood Construction Grant program rests upon the ability of those agencies, that are awarded this Grant, to increase access to high quality early learning programs for children at risk in high – need areas.

It would be extremely detrimental to Illinois if the needed additional resources were not provided by DHS given the unique opportunity that was provided by Illinois legislature to increase the availability of services through its own Early Childhood Capital Development Construction grant program.

- **Maintain funding for the Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon home visiting programs in the DHS budget. These programs were funded at the \$10,021,800 and \$6,870,300 respectively in FY 13.**

Failure to maintain the state's investment in these programs would trigger the loss of future funding and require the state to repay the federal government \$23.5 million dollars due to maintenance of effort requirements associated with the Affordable Care Act.

The foundation of these recommendations from Through A Child's Eyes are based upon the findings that significantly larger return on investment in the funding of early

childhood programs, a proven intervention strategy, has been clearly demonstrated in the work of Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman. His findings indicate “that early childhood programs targeted towards children’s earliest years, early childhood programs, have a much larger return on investment than other interventions children may experience throughout their youth.”

To demonstrate to the distinguished members of the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14 both the measurable results of their past investments in early childhood education in Illinois, is a proven intervention strategy; Through A Child’s Eye’s present the following information regarding the Through A Child’s Eye’s Pre-Kindergarten Program. Also, as an organization that has been selected as a top tier applicant in the ongoing Early Childhood Construction Grant application process, we wanted to share our plans for the utilization of the Early Childhood Construction grant funds for at risk children residing in a high need community.

As relates to the Through A Child’s Eyes Pre-Kindergarten. For each of the eight years that Through a Child’s Eyes has provided Preschool for All/Pre-Kindergarten program services we have conducted a Program Evaluation at the end of each academic year. The purpose of the Program Evaluation is to measure the performance of Through A Child’s Eyes Pre-Kindergarten Program for that academic year to attain the goal for each component of the Early Childhood Block Grant – Preschool for All Ages 3-5 grant and the emphasis of the Illinois State Board of Education on improving achievement and closing the achievement gap for young children who are At-Risk of Academic Failure. The emphasis ISBE is consistent with the first mandated priority of the Illinois legislature for Preschool for All/Pre-Kindergarten funding – children who have been identified/determined to be at-risk of academic failure.

In the most recent academic year, 2011-2012, the Through A Child’s Eyes Pre-Kindergarten program evaluation indicates that we had provide services to 467 children; children who have been identified/determined to be at-risk of academic failure and meet the first mandated priority of the Illinois legislature for Preschool for All/Pre-Kindergarten funding.

The demographics of the children in the program are as follows:

- 98.4% of the children were Hispanic
- 69.9% of the children listed their Native Language as Spanish.
- 85.2% of the children listed their Home Language as Spanish.
- 94.5% were at or below the poverty level as defined by the US Department of Agriculture.

Performance outcomes for each child in the program are measured in two ways:

1. We utilize the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment tool, a standardized, research based assessment tool, to measure the performances outcomes of the children in the program.

2. We conduct Student Readiness evaluations at the end of the academic year. The Student Readiness evaluations are based upon observations and documentation of the child's academic performance by the teacher and the child's parents.

Performance outcomes that were identified through the utilization of the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Tool:

Performance outcomes for the children in the program, all of whom initially entered the program had been determined to be at risk of academic failure, according to reports from Teaching Strategies Gold Growth Reports indicate:

That for the Three Year Olds:

95.5% had met or exceeded expectations in Social Emotional development
97.7% had met or exceeded expectations in Physical development
94.7% had met or exceeded expectations in Language development
90.2% had met or exceeded expectations in Cognitive development
90.2% had met or exceeded expectations in Literacy learning skills
81.2% had met or exceeded expectations in Mathematics learning skills

That for the Four Year Olds:

84.4% had met or exceeded expectations in Social Emotional development
86.3% had met or exceeded expectations in Physical development
82.6% had met or exceeded expectations in Language development
83.9% had met or exceeded expectations in Cognitive development
87.6% had met or exceeded expectations in Literacy learning skills
69.5% had met or exceeded expectations in Mathematics learning skills

Performance outcomes that were identified through the utilization of the Student Readiness evaluations:

Performance outcomes for the children in the program, all of whom initially entered the program had been determined to be at risk of academic failure, indicate that for Student Readiness, as rated by the teacher and the child's parents:

91.3% of the children identified as three and four year olds, not age appropriate to start kindergarten for the 2012-2013 school year, were rated as either Above Average or Average in attaining the developmental goals and standards appropriate for this age.

94.7% of the children identified as age appropriate to start kindergarten for 2012-2013 school year were rated as either Above Average or Average in attaining developmental goals and standards appropriate for this age.

As relates to Through a Child's Eyes having been selected as a top tier applicant in the ongoing Early Childhood Construction Grant application process to expand the provision of early childhood services for at risk children residing in a high need community, our plans for the utilization of the grant funds includes the renovation of a build in Cicero to create new a Early Childhood Center that will expand the provision of early childhood program services to 300 children in Cicero.

Cicero has consistently been identified as the community with the greatest underserved population of young children in Illinois. It is projected that 200 of those capacities would be for the Pre-School for All program, funded by ISBE and 100 of those capacities would be for licensed full day child care, funded by DHS. The site selected for location of the Early Childhood Center is based upon a careful analysis of the population of Cicero to determine an available accessible location where the families with the most need for early childhood service reside.

In closing, Through A Child's Eyes urges the distinguished members this Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14, specifically ISBE and DHS, to restore funding for early care and education programs in each of their respective budgets. Specifically, we recommend the following:

That ISBE should

- **Restore funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant in the ISBE budget by at least \$24.9 million to bring the total allocation for the Early Childhood Block Grant to \$325,123,500.**
- **Restore bilingual education in the ISBE budget by at least \$7 million to bring the total spending to \$70,381,200.**
- **Be prepared to allocate sufficient additional recourses into the Early Childhood Block Grant to respond accordingly to the unprecedented positive action of the legislature to fund an Early Childhood Construction Grant Program.**

That DHS should

- **Maintain funding for the Early Intervention program in the DHS budget.**
- **Restore funding for the Child Care Assistance Program in the DHS budget by an amount sufficient to scale back the increased parent co-payment initiated in FY 13.**

- **Be prepared to allocate sufficient additional recourses into the Child Care Assistance program to respond accordingly to the unprecedented positive action of the legislature to fund an Early Childhood Construction Grant Program.**
- **Maintain funding for the Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon home visiting programs in the DHS budget. These programs were funded at the \$10,021,800 and \$6,870,300 respectively in FY 13.**

We thank you for this opportunity to provide this written testimony to the distinguished members this Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing for FY 14.

If there is a need for further comments on the contents of our recommendations or as the budget process for FY 14 unfolds, please feel free to contact me.



Bob Cammarata
Director
Through A Child's Eyes
1010 S. Hooker Street
Chicago, Illinois 60642-4633
Phone: 312-943-3600 Ext. 319
Fax: 866-410-9189
Email: bob@tace.info
www.tace.info

Triton College testimony

We are here to represent the Triton College Education Program and Lab School. All children deserve the right to be cared for in a high quality Early Childhood Education Program. Our responsibility is to provide quality care and education in settings that are safe, healthy and nurturing. The Triton College Education Program and Lab School is a model of best practices in teaching young children and adults. Adhering to the teaching standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and The State of Illinois, the Education Program promotes student success while supporting the individual needs of a diverse community of learners. Our mission is twofold; we provide quality care for children and educate future teachers.

We know that for low-income families the need for high quality programs is especially important. 40% of the Children that attend our program are receiving subsidies from Illinois Action for Children. Without this funding these children would not be able to participate in a quality program. Many of the adult students with young children at Triton College would not be able to complete their education without having this program available to them. We have found that the communities within Triton College's district have an increased need for quality Early Childhood Education Programs. At this time we are unable to meet the additional demand for children due to our current space limitations. If we had the resources to expand our Lab School, we could better address the childcare needs of the many families that comprise our Triton College community. That is why we are exploring plans to expand our Lab School program to accommodate this growing demand for high quality Early Childhood Education programs.

We know that Early Childhood Education Teachers are considered to be one of the top fifty fastest growing occupations in the state of Illinois. Projected increases in growth for a ten- year period started in 2004 estimated that 23,690 Early Childhood Education teachers will be employed by 2014. This is due to the increasing demand for high quality Early Childhood Education programs. That is why we are training future teachers who will be knowledgeable and skilled in providing developmentally appropriate curriculum, and is familiar with the Early Learning Standards. These nurturing teachers are the connection that is necessary to have a high quality Early Childhood Education program.

Research supports the importance of providing "HIGH QUALITY" programs for young children. In a report by, Robert Lynch of the Economic Policy Institute (2004), "Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal, and Social Benefits of Investments in Early Childhood Development." He concludes the benefits of investing in Early Childhood Education would have a substantial payoff in the future. He states that such programs would ultimately reduce costs for remedial education, criminal justice, and welfare benefits and it would increase income earned and taxes paid.

Funding for high quality early childhood education programs is CRUCIAL to the success of our communities. Children who have a good foundation can grow into great students in elementary, high school and college. This then leads to future doctors, lawyers, community leaders and occupations that we have not even thought of yet! All children should have an opportunity to start their education with

the means for success. Programs like Triton College and others provide for the future. WE NEED FUNDING FOR THESE CHILDREN!

Testimonial:

Raja Rais: "I have two children in Triton's program. I have no family here in the United States. My family is in Morocco. I would have never been able to complete my education if it were not for Triton College Child Development Center and the state funding I receive. The state funding helped me to provide the child care for my children while I was taking classes. One income cannot make all family expenses. I picked Triton's program after I observed it. I liked the quality of the program and the teachers. I like the communication with the children and this approach to families. "

**Testimony of United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
Joint Early Childhood Public Budget Hearing
December 3, 2012**

Education is one of the three pillars of United Way Metropolitan Chicago's community investment model. Like the other issue areas - Income and Health - we perceive Education as a social right that is paramount to a self-sufficient life. The research shows that without access to a high quality education, people and communities are less financially stable and substantially more likely to experience poor health outcomes. Education is a cornerstone upon which strong families and vibrant communities are built. By focusing on early childhood (birth to 5 years), children will have the building blocks, through family support and skill attainment, to begin kindergarten poised for lifelong learning.

Based upon a planning process that was conducted in 2010, UWMC invests in two critical transition phases:

- **Early Childhood: Children enter school ready to learn**
- **Middle School: Students transition successfully into high school**

Today's testimony addresses the early childhood portion of our investment.

UWMC supports increased public investment in two types of evidence-based early childhood - *high quality preschool* and *home visiting* - to improve early childhood education.

Why is This important?

There is a wide body of research that supports investment in early childhood, but the research can be boiled down into four basic points:

- We can't wait. The most rapid brain development happens early in life and this provides the foundation for all later learning.
 - ~ A child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 yearsⁱ
 - ~ 46% of children start school without the skills they need to learnⁱⁱ
 - ~ Early experiences powerfully shape the brain's learning pathwaysⁱⁱⁱ

- Disparity. Skill gaps show up between low-income children and the general population at very young ages, often as early as 18 months, and long before children enter kindergarten^{iv}.
 - Economics/social efficiency. If you wait to address skill gaps, they are harder to close^v.
 - Impact. Research shows that investments in disadvantaged children and families yield the most impact in the longer term^{vi}.
-

The general purpose of early childhood programming is to enhance the social interactions and the quality of learning for children 0-5. Programs may work to improve early cognitive, literacy, or numeracy skills, and/or work to promote positive socio-emotional growth, such as by reducing antisocial or problem behavior. There are many different kinds of programs offering these types of services, but they can all be broken down into two basic categories—parent-based and child-based approaches—with some programs combining approaches for different purposes or stages.

Parent-based Programs: These programs tend to focus on high-risk families with infants and toddlers (ages 0-2) and work with parents to help them better nurture and care for their children, with the hope that this work will translate to better long-term outcomes for families and children. Parenting education programs seek to boost parents' general knowledge about parenting and child development, often by providing information in conjunction with instrumental and emotional support.

Child-based Programs: These intensive preschool education programs typically serve children ages 3-5, while some are available for children aged zero to five. They provide enriching experiences *directly to children*, though many also have parent education, home visitation, and/or parent engagement components. In its best manifestation, this approach seeks to maximize the time children spend in a developmentally appropriate and stimulating classroom or group setting.

vi,vi

Given the wide variety of programming that exists for young children, what does the research say about the relative impacts of those programs on child outcomes? Two models consistently pop up in the literature—high quality preschool education for lower income children and parent education through home visiting—both of which focus on low-income populations.

-
- **Preschool:** model preschool/early childhood programs appear to have the most solid evidence base to date, demonstrating clear positive impacts on cognitive and social skills that translate into later success.
 - **Home Visiting:** there is also a growing body of evidence that demonstrates gains in a wide range of child and parent outcomes in home visiting programs. From our reading of the current research, these programs are very effective at addressing health outcomes, abuse/neglect, and the parent child relationship.

From the research, UWMC has identified these two evidence-based approaches as the best opportunities to make public and private investments in high-quality early childhood education. Home visiting will target the highest risk families at the earliest ages to build the basic foundation for learning and connect these families to preschool. Preschool programs will then be able to pick up where the other program leaves off, in order to amplify gains made in the earliest years. UWMC is particularly interested in high need areas where there are high quality service gaps but that also have providers that have the capacity to fuse the strategies into one program or in collaborations where expert providers work together to provide these high quality interventions.

We understand and appreciate the fiscal pressures under which state government is currently operating. We know the difficult decisions that all of you must make in recommendations for early education program funding. However, we believe the research and evidence to date make a strong case for increased investment in the programs we have described this morning in order to improve the educational outcomes of some of our highest risk children and reduce the greater costs associated with later, more intensive interventions.



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

Prioritizing Funding to Support Children's Success in School and Life
Testimony before the Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing
Submitted by Paula Corrigan-Halpern on behalf of Voices for Illinois Children
December 3, 2012

Voices for Illinois Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, child advocacy organization that works to build better lives for children across the state. For 25 years, Voices has helped parents, community leaders, and policy-makers understand and respond to the issues facing children and families. We conduct policy analysis, raise public awareness about crucial issues, build coalitions to initiate and pursue policy solutions, and mobilize individuals, groups, and communities to speak up for children.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to present our testimony at today's Joint Early Childhood Budget Hearing. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) each play a vital role in strengthening children and their families. By bringing these agencies together today, you are recognizing the interconnectedness of their work and acknowledging the value of a comprehensive approach in preparing children for success in school and life.

We can see the gap in children's learning and development before they start kindergarten, or even preschool. Research has documented disparities in children's cognitive, social, and physical development as early as nine months of age.¹ These disparities often grow wider as children become older.

In Voices' 2011 *Illinois Kids Count* report, "Great at Eight," we stated that "school readiness is a long chain of interrelated factors that combine early in a child's life and extend well past the first day of kindergarten." Strong families, supportive communities, good health, and a high-quality education are essential to children's success.

Today we encourage you, as you formulate your FY14 budgets, to prioritize the following cost-effective interventions and strategies that improve children's lives and benefit the state's bottom line:

- **Home visiting programs**, including Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon;
- **Early Intervention** services;
- the **Early Childhood Block Grant**, including preschool for three- and four-year-olds and developmental services for infants and toddlers;
- **Child Care Assistance**; and
- the **Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership**.

¹ Tamara Halle et al., *Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2009)

We also strongly advocate for sufficient funding to the Department of Children and Family Services to protect children from abuse and neglect and ensure that they have stable, permanent homes.

Home Visiting Programs

Home visiting programs, including Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon, provide coaching to parents so they are able to provide safe, nurturing environments for their young children. These programs promote positive interactions, encourage developmentally appropriate responses by parents to their children, and foster strong parent-child relationships. The voluntary home visiting programs also connect families to preventative health care and other services.

Research shows that home visiting programs improve children's literacy, increase high school graduation rates, and decrease rates of child abuse and neglect.

Illinois is receiving funding from the federal government to expand home visiting services and reach a greater number of pregnant women, their infants, toddlers, and families through this voluntary program. In order to remain eligible for these funds, Illinois must maintain its effort on funding for home visiting services in the Health Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon budget lines. Erosion in the state's commitment to these home visiting programs will place the state at risk of repayment of \$19 million already awarded in federal funds to Illinois and jeopardize future funding.

Voices urges you to protect these programs from additional budget cuts.

Early Intervention

Illinois' Early Intervention program provides services for families with children under age three who may have or who are at risk for developmental delays. Providing these services helps ensure the best long-term outcomes for children. Research shows that children who receive Early Intervention services are less likely to have language and learning difficulties, have higher reading and math scores, and lower dropout rates compared to their peers with comparable developmental delays who did not receive Early Intervention.²

General Revenue Fund support for the Early Intervention program was cut by \$3 million in the FY13 budget. We urge you to restore that funding to the program in FY14.

Early Childhood Block Grant

Illinois has long recognized the value of investing in high-quality preschool programs and developmental services for at-risk infants and toddlers. From 2002 to 2009, the

² Ceglowshi, D. and Bacigalupa, C., "Childcare as early intervention," Early Childhood Research and Practice, 2002.

state's investments in early childhood education grew substantially. At the height of funding for the state's Early Childhood Block Grant (ECGB) in FY09, 95,000 three- and four-year olds were able to attend state-funded preschool, and tens of thousands of infants and toddlers received developmental services.

According to a 2012 evaluation of Illinois' Preschool for All, children participating in the program showed significant improvements in school-readiness, including language and social skills, attention, and persistence.³

A 2011 report found that Illinois' preschool investment has resulted in an estimated \$353 million to \$530 million annually in combined cost savings and additional revenue to the state. This return is significantly greater than our investment in preschool.⁴

Early Childhood Block Grant Funding is now \$80 million below FY 2009 funding levels. This erosion of funding is jeopardizing years of progress in early childhood education. Between FY09 and FY12, the General Assembly cut early childhood funding by \$55 million, which resulted in the fewest number of children attending state-funded preschool in six years. This May, despite the State Board of Education's and the Governor's recommendation to restore \$20 million of the previous cuts, the General Assembly cut the Early Childhood Block Grant an additional \$25 million.

Based on the findings from the 2011 report "Cost Savings Analysis of School Readiness in Illinois," these funding cuts do not save the state money. The cuts increase costs elsewhere in the state budget in areas including preventable special education services, grade retention, and teacher turnover.

Restoring the \$25 million cut made to the FY13 Early Childhood Block Grant budget is the first step in stemming the loss of these critical programs and reducing costs to the state. An additional \$20 million increase, as recommended last year by the State Board, would inch the state toward regaining the significant ground that Illinois children have lost.

Child Care Assistance

Too many Illinois families are struggling to make ends meet. Most parents simply do not have the option of choosing not to work to take care of their children, making child care a necessity. Unfortunately, many lower-income parents do not have the means to afford high-quality child care. They need assistance to ensure that their children have access to safe, nurturing, and educationally enriching care while they work to provide basic necessities for their family.

³ "Illinois Preschool for All (PFA) Program Evaluation" (Erickson Institute, SRI International, and Illinois State Board of Education, March 2012).

⁴ "Cost Savings Analysis of School Readiness in Illinois," report prepared for Illinois Action for Children, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and Voices for Illinois Children (Wilder Research, 2011).

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program enables participating low-income parents to work *and* provide quality care for their children.

In 2011, about 173,000 children – 24,000 fewer than in 2005 -- received services each month under the Child Care Assistance Program. More than half of these children were under six years old, and 48 percent lived in families with incomes below the poverty line.

Increases to the co-payments paid by parents and tighter income guidelines to restrict access to the program force many parents to make difficult decisions about the quality of care their children receive.

The state's deficit and backlog of unpaid bills continues to put this important support for working families at risk. ***We urge you to restore funding to the child care program.***

Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership

Mental health is a children's issue. Recent research indicates that between 9 and 14 percent of children under the age of six experience social, emotional and behavioral challenges⁵. The prevalence of these challenges is even higher in families experiencing economic instability, domestic violence, substance abuse, or other life stressors. The greater the number of risk factors, the greater the potential for poor mental health outcomes for both the caregivers and young children. Without intervention, these challenges have life-long impacts on healthy development and learning.

In 2003, Illinois became a leader in addressing children's mental health by passing the Children Mental Health Act. This Act created the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership. The Partnership is building a coordinated comprehensive system of care to reach and better serve children who would otherwise fall through the cracks of various agencies.

The Partnership receives funding both from ISBE and DHS. In one example of the DHS-funded work in 2011, the Partnership provided support to over 1,200 parents in the correction system and their children so that they could maintain positive relationships with each other during a time of separation and stress. ISBE funding for the Partnership supports work with parents and community organizations that partner with school districts to improve social-emotional learning and to strengthen school- and community-based services to address students' mental health needs.

The Partnership's work results in an annual savings of well over \$19 million in reduced psychiatric inpatient hospitalizations. ***Over the last seven years, the Partnership has helped the state avoid \$136 million in these costs.***

⁵ Smith, S., Stagman, S., Blank, S., Ong, C., and McDow, K. (2011). *Building Strong Systems of Support for Young Children's Mental Health: Key Strategies for States and a Planning Tool*. National Center for Children in Poverty, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

In these challenging economic times, the Partnership is more necessary than ever. Partnership funding has been reduced from \$8.9 million in FY09 to \$3.3 million in FY13. Last year, the State Board recommended that the ISBE appropriation for the Partnership be increased to \$2 million. The General Assembly, however, cut the Partnership's ISBE funding to only \$300,000.

We urge the State Board to maintain its recommendation of \$2 million for the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership. This funding would restore the Partnership's work to implement social emotional learning standards and improve school- and community-based mental health services for students.

Funding for DCFS

DCFS plays a critical role in protecting the well-being of children. More than half of substantiated cases of abuse and neglect involve children under the age of six. The budget passed by the General Assembly in May cut General Funds support for DCFS by \$105 million. This 13 percent reduction was the deepest cut absorbed by any major state agency. ***Voices urges restoration of this funding to ensure the safety and well-being of the state's most vulnerable children.***

Great at Eight

The interventions and strategies discussed above are important components in ensuring that Illinois children are prepared to succeed in school by the end of third grade. When children are "Great at Eight," they are:

- mastering grade-level academics by receiving an education that builds on their abilities and strengthens the areas where they need support;
- learning the social emotional skills that enable them to function well in school and life;
- physically and emotionally health;
- supported by involved parents and teachers who are working together for the success of each child;
- fully embraced by their communities and able to participate in the routines and rituals of childhood;
- accessing opportunities that further their interests and skills; and
- able to safely exercise their growing independence with support from adults at home, in school, and in the community to make good choices.

The priorities Illinois sets for the FY14 budget ***and*** the wider actions that the state takes to secure firmer financial footing will determine how well our children are prepared – in both the short- and long-term – to succeed in school and life. Voices has continually called for a ***balanced approach*** to the state's budget crisis. This balanced approach includes securing

adequate and sustainable resources, reforming the state's pension system, and ensuring resources are targeted effectively.

For more information, contact Paula Corrigan-Halpern at paula@voices4kids.org or 312-516-5566.