



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Signs Legislation to Strengthen Education in Illinois

Bills Increase Support for Birth-to-Three Early Childhood Programs and Help Provide Incentives for Deserving Teachers

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today signed legislation to strengthen education in Illinois. The new laws support early childhood education funding and make it easier to give incentives for teacher excellence. Today's action is part of Governor Quinn's agenda to give every child the opportunity for a high-quality education.

"The period from birth to three years of age is the most critical time in a child's development and we must do all we can to give our youngest residents the education they need to succeed in life," Governor Quinn said. "We should also let our top educators know how much we appreciate their efforts, especially when those teachers serve the areas of our state with the greatest need."

House Bill 4440, sponsored by State Representative Linda Chapa LaVia (D-Aurora) and State Senator Kimberly Lightford (D-Maywood), increases the percentage of Early Childhood Education Block Grant program funds that must be set aside for children ages 0 to 3. The bill raises that percentage from 11 to 14 percent in Fiscal Year 2015, and to 20 percent by Fiscal Year 2016. The block grants are distributed by the State Board of Education. The legislation is effective July 1, 2014.

"There have been numerous studies that have shown the importance of early childhood education for our children," Representative Chapa LaVia said. "This stage is vital to the growth and development of young minds, and we must do all we can to expand funding for these crucial programs. In doing so, we can help put our children on the path towards a brighter future."

House Bill 5393, sponsored by State Representative Emily McAsey (D-Lockport) and State Senator Melinda Bush (D-Grayslake), streamlines the requirements to provide a \$1,500 annual incentive to teachers who achieve Illinois Master Teacher certification through the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Priority for the incentives will be given to teachers in low-performing schools or those in districts with high poverty rates. The legislation is effective July 1, 2014.

"Teachers are responsible for educating the leaders of tomorrow, so it is important they have the most effective training available," Representative McAsey said. "This program allows highly qualified educators to continue sharpening their skills and provides for greater student achievement."

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“Quality teachers are key to student education,” Senator Bush said. “This both incentivizes and rewards teachers for getting their Masters’ certification.”

Governor Quinn is committed to properly funding education in Illinois in order to give every child the opportunity for success. The Governor's 5-year budget blueprint includes a historic \$6 billion increase in classroom spending over the next five years, doubling the investment in college scholarships for students in need and increasing access to higher education through dual enrollment and early college programs. Over the next five years, the Governor’s plan would bring classroom funding to the highest levels in Illinois history.

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