

# THE TIME IS NOW

## ILLINOIS NEEDS TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**The state budget nightmare is already hurting children and families throughout Illinois, as programs drastically reduce services. Now is the time to act to ensure programs are not permanently damaged or eliminated.** Like many states, Illinois faces an unprecedented budget shortfall, due to both the recession and a flawed state revenue structure that does not support basic services. This shortfall cannot be closed by cuts alone, and requires a balanced solution – one that generates new revenue through a moderate income tax increase.

In May, the Senate wisely approved a proposal – House Bill 174 – to raise new tax revenue to protect services from many cuts and bolster education funding in the long-term. House Bill 174 stalled in the House, but legislators soon could reconvene for another opportunity to vote on an income tax increase.

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**In the meantime, children and families face real harm without adequate revenue to keep services running. Examples include:**

### HEALTH

- Many students will lose access to timely care, as school health centers close or reduce hours.
- More women will be at risk of breast and cervical cancer, as screening and treatment services are gutted.
- Prevention, early intervention and treatment efforts to strengthen kids' mental wellness will be jeopardized, as funding for the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership priorities will be wiped-out.

### EDUCATION

- Young children could lose the preschool services that would help them enter kindergarten ready to succeed, and at-risk infants and toddlers could be denied the developmental services they need to grow up healthy.
- Youth will not have safe and educational alternatives to the streets as after-school programs, including Teen REACH, are scaled-back or disappear altogether.
- More students' hopes of attending college will be quashed, as financial aid for low-income and first-time students will be slashed.

### HUMAN SERVICES

- Thousands of families will be stripped of child care services, as funding is slashed. Even the poorest families may lose child care.
- New moms and dads of at-risk infants and toddlers will lose the guidance of “parent coaching” services, as Healthy Families Illinois and Parents Too Soon home-visiting services are cut.
- Homeless youth will be stranded on the streets with no safe place to turn, as their services are gutted.

The Governor's Administration has proposed these and other cuts in the face of Illinois' massive budget shortfall. ***Prevent these cuts and protect children and families by contacting the governor and your legislators today.*** Urge them to support an income tax increase and oppose a budget that fails to fund critical programs. **Visit [Voices4kids.org](http://Voices4kids.org) for tips and resources.**

