ILLINOIS BUDGET CRISIS

Cuts Harm Parents’ Education, Ability to Work, and Their Young Children

VOICES
for Illinois Children
Voices for Illinois Children works as a catalyst for change to improve the lives of children of all ages throughout our state. We are committed to the well-being of every child. All children, regardless of circumstances, are vital to the preservation of a vigorous democracy. We believe children do well when they grow up in strong, supportive families, and that families do well in supportive communities. We believe in focusing on preventing problems by employing comprehensive, well-researched strategies to improve children’s education and health care and to strengthen their families’ economic security and the social services on which they depend.

For 30 years, we have helped parents, community leaders, and policymakers understand and respond to the issues facing children and families. Together, we have affected the well-being of an entire generation of Illinois children through achievements in early childhood education and care, K–12 education, health care, children’s mental health, child welfare, family economic security, and afterschool and youth development.

Voices raises awareness of the needs facing children and families, builds strong partnerships focused on solutions, convenes stakeholders to explore data, generates public support and political will for needed improvements, and works to ensure implementation of strong policies and programs.

**OUR MISSION**

Voices for Illinois Children is an independent advocacy organization that champions strong public policies and investments for all children in our state.

Illinois Kids Count is a project of Voices for Illinois Children and is part of the KIDS COUNT® network of projects supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the status of America’s children on a state-by-state basis. Through Illinois Kids Count reports, media events, statewide and local symposia, legislator forums, and other activities, Voices for Illinois Children assesses the challenges facing children and families and seeks to guide policy trends and goals on behalf of children.

*KIDS COUNT® is a registered trademark of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.*
Children’s first five years of life are their most important developmental period. Yet, when young children live in families that can’t make ends meet, they are more likely to experience hunger, poorer health, developmental delays, and learning disabilities. Growing up in such conditions also reduces children’s likelihood of success in school, as well as their adult employment and earnings.¹

Unfortunately, in Illinois, many children live in families that are struggling to afford basic necessities.

- 1 in 10 Illinois children under six live in “deep poverty” (50% of the poverty level, or only $12,125 for a family of four).
- 1 in 5 live in poverty ($24,250 for a family of four).
- 4 in 10 are “low income” (twice the poverty level, or $48,500 for a family of four).²

These statistics, however, don’t tell the full story. Significantly higher percentages of children of color grow up in poverty. While 11 percent of Illinois white children under six years old live in poverty, 45 percent of black children under six, and 30 percent of Latino children under six live in poverty.³

To remove barriers, build opportunities, and advance equity for all Illinois’ children, equitable public investments in young children are essential. And since young children do not live on islands separate from their parents and families, public investments that reduce poverty and increase families’ economic security are critical to children’s wellbeing.

Illinois, however, is moving in the wrong direction. Ever since the disastrous 2015 income tax cuts, our state has been undermining public investments in both parents and their young children. To create a brighter future for our state, lawmakers and Governor Rauner must urgently come together to enact a balanced budget that raises the billions of dollars in revenue necessary to stop damaging cuts to a broad range of investments in children and families.

Cuts that Harm Parents’ Economic Security
Cuts to Illinois’ Child Care Assistance Program

Quality, affordable child care is not only essential to improving families’ economic wellbeing, but also improves children’s

**Black Children Under 6 are More than 4 Times More Likely to Live in Poverty than White Children in Illinois**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Black</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.9</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>44.9</td>
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**SOURCE** Voices for Illinois Children analysis, U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, 1-year Estimates, Table 17020.
healthy development and spurs our state’s economy. Without assistance, however, quality child care that allows parents to work and provide for their families is out of reach for too many families.

In June 2015, Governor Rauner put in place an emergency rule that severely restricted entrance into the state’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which provides a sliding-fee scale based on income to make child care affordable for low-income families. By cutting the income eligibility level from 185 percent to 50 percent of the poverty level (from $37,167 to $10,045 a year for a family of three), about 90 percent of previously eligible families were barred from entering the program.9

With this drastic change, a parent working full time at the state minimum wage ($8.25 an hour) suddenly was earning too much to enter the program. Other restrictions shut the program door to parents who were pursuing college full time and increased parent copayments substantially.

While the governor raised the income eligibility threshold to 162 percent of the poverty level last November, child enrollment is still 35,000 below where it was before June 2015. An estimated 10,000 families are still being denied entry into the program because their incomes fall in between 162 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level. About 5,000 children are still left out because their parents are enrolled full time in college.10 Though exact numbers are not available, this is likely affecting families of color at higher rates since they are disproportionately low income.

Without access to affordable child care, too many parents must choose between working and providing quality care that improve their children’s healthy development. Others may give up on a college education because quality, affordable child care is not available.

### Reduced Access to Higher Education, Adult Education, and Training Programs

Illinois’ budget crisis and failure to pass a fiscal year 2016 budget for an entire year have made it much harder for low-income students (including parents) to realize the dream of pursuing a higher education.

Nationwide, about one in four college students (4.8 million) have their own dependent children. Seven in ten of these student parents are women. Students with dependent children are far more likely to be low-income, non-white, and first-generation college students. Thus, harming the ability of low-income students, particularly those of color, to pursue higher education will also disproportionately harm poor children of color.

The state’s dismantling of public investments in higher education has taken multiple forms over the past two years. Investments in Illinois’ public colleges and universities have been cut by a combined nearly 60 percent in fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017, compared to prior levels. These enormous cuts have caused upheaval at Illinois’ public colleges and universities. Chicago State University, which predominately serves low-income students of color, was within days of closing its doors before emergency funding was passed. Public colleges and universities around the state have laid off staff and cut programs, reducing the quality of education available to students and eroding part of the foundation of Illinois’ long-term economic success.

The state also failed to fund Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants, which make college more affordable for low-income students, throughout much of fiscal year 2016. In the 2014–15 school year, about 128,000 students received MAP grants, down from about 158,000 recipients three years earlier due to budget cuts and far below the 347,000 students eligible for awards in 2014–15 but who didn’t receive awards due to inadequate funding.

Over 45,000 students receiving MAP grants were independent (i.e., not “dependents” on their parents’ tax returns). Independent MAP grant recipients were, on average, 30 years old and had a mean annual income of only about $15,000. While data on the percentage of independent MAP grant recipients who are parents is not available, less than 20 percent are married but the mean household size is

### Recommendations

- Pass a balanced budget that raises the necessary revenue to support programs that help Illinois communities thrive.
- Restore eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program to 185 percent of the poverty level and to parents pursuing a college degree full time.
- Restore state investments in higher education and MAP grants.
- Target funding to areas that improve educational outcomes for low-income parents of color.
- Restore Safe from the Start funding and increase investments in children’s mental health.
2.2 people, suggesting that many of these recipients have children.10

In a recent survey of MAP grant recipients, one in seven respondents were considering not enrolling in college in the 2016–17 school year because of the financial difficulties they encountered when MAP grants weren’t funded for much of the last school year. Respondents also mentioned that the uncertainty could cause them to take out additional loans, work more hours, take fewer credits, or transfer to another school.11

While lawmakers and Governor Rauner passed funding in April and June to belatedly cover 2015–16 MAP grants, they have yet to pass MAP grant funding for the current school year. Without MAP funding, many low-income students will be forced to take on additional debt to pay for school, adding to their debt load that is already far higher on average for students with children than students without.12

Adult education and literacy programs, which help adults improve their English literacy and develop skills for employment and self-sufficiency, were also hard hit during the budget impasse. As a result, at least 21 programs reduced support services and classes, and six programs closed altogether.13 While the recent “stopgap” budget passed in June authorized $32.3 million in funding for services provided from July 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016, this amount only covers estimated fiscal year 2016 expenses, a 12-month period. Thus, there is no funding left for the current fiscal year. Without new revenue, lawmakers and Governor Rauner won’t be able to provide new funding without adding to the state’s over $9 billion in unpaid bills.

Reduced adult education and literacy services will harm not only families’ economic security, but also the ability of parents to help improve their children’s educational development. For the last year with available data (fiscal year 2010), 56 percent of program participants were women, and 81 percent were between the ages of 16 and 44. Program participants were also disproportionately people of color—49 percent Latino, 19 percent black, and 8 percent Asian.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Children Graduate with More Undergraduate Debt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28,350</td>
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<td>29,452</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-parents</td>
<td>Parents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Average debt is for students with some undergraduate debt. Sample does not include students with no undergraduate debt.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illinois Adult Education and Family Literacy Data and Characteristics, April 2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 16-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>80.7%</td>
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Voices for Illinois Children
voices4kids.org

ILLINOIS BUDGET CRISIS

Cuts that Directly Harm Young Children

Cuts to Home Visiting Programs
Home visiting programs offer a broad range of intensive services and supports for at-risk pregnant women and families with young children and can improve maternal and child health, enhance social-emotional development, and future academic success. Unfortunately, the state budget crisis hurt Parents Too Soon and Healthy Families Illinois, which support home visiting services for more than 5,000 children a year. As a result, home visiting providers received no state funds throughout fiscal year 2016, causing at least half of providers to report reducing the number of families served, laying off or furloughing staff, or other consequences.

Though the “stopgap” budget provided funding for Parents Too Soon and Healthy Families Illinois, the supposedly 18-months’ worth of funding (July 1, 2015–December 31, 2016) does not even cover fiscal year 2016 expenses, leaving nothing to cover fiscal year 2017 costs. Unless lawmakers and the governor raise significant new revenue, any additional spending authorized for home visiting will simply be added to the backlog of unpaid bills.

“Stopgap” Budget Leaves Home Visiting Programs Without Funding for Current Fiscal Year

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents Too Soon</td>
<td>$6,698,500</td>
<td>$(6,870,300)</td>
<td>$(171,800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Families Program</td>
<td>$9,462,500</td>
<td>$(10,040,000)</td>
<td>$(577,500)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Cuts to Safe from the Start

Exposure to violence and the resulting trauma can have devastating effects on children, even in the first months of life. Evidence-based trauma treatment is essential for children and can help prevent mental health problems later. The Safe Start program provides mental health services for children aged six and under and their family members who have been exposed to violence.

However, due to the lack of funding since fiscal year 2015 (when funding was $1.2 million), all nine implementation sites across the state have had to reduce their collaboration and public education efforts, thereby reducing the number of new clients that are referred to Safe from the Start providers. Therapist layoffs have led to fewer services for families exposed to family or community violence, and seven sites across the state have either stopped accepting new families or have limited the number of new families they are able to serve. As a result, during the period of July to December 2015, 100 fewer children received therapy for exposure to violence, compared to the same period a year earlier. More than 200 fewer people received prevention services.

Brighter Future Needs Investments for Both Parents and Children

Illinois’ ongoing budget crisis continues to harm parents and their children. Due to the huge 2015 income tax cuts, the state is running large deficits even after large and damaging cuts to a variety of services that invest in children and their families. Without billions of dollars in new revenue, lawmakers and Governor Rauner will not be able to continue current services—and recent laudable increases to funding of early childhood priorities such as preschool are at dire risk. To build a brighter future for Illinois, we must continue to make (and pay for) public investments in our children, families, and communities.

Unless lawmakers and the governor raise significant new revenue, any additional spending authorized for home visiting will simply be added to the backlog of unpaid bills.
The Annie E. Casey's Foundation's updated KIDS COUNT Data Center is an online, searchable database that provides access to hundreds of national, state, and local-level child well-being indicators related to education, employment and income, health, poverty, and youth risk factors. New site features include improved search options; more attractive and easier to create tables, maps and graphs; and better ways to share information through social media on how children are faring.

**MOBILE SITE**

All indicators currently found on the KIDS COUNT Data Center can be accessed quickly and easily anytime, anywhere on your mobile device at: mobile.kidscount.org

Access the Illinois KIDS COUNT profile page at: datacenter.kidscount.org/data#IL

Special thanks to the KINETIK team for the design and production of this report.

The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of Voices for Illinois Children alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Permission to copy, disseminate, or otherwise use information from the Illinois Budget Crisis: Cuts Harm Parents’ Education, Ability to Work, and Their Young Children report is granted so long as appropriate acknowledgment is given.

ENDNOTES

4 Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Child Care Assistance: Helping Parents Work and Children Succeed; and America’s Edge, Strengthening Illinois Businesses through Investments in Early Care and Education, March 2011.
5 Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Thriving Children, Successful Parents: A Two-Generation Approach to Policy, July 2014. Of poor parents who pay for child care, they spend, on average, 30 percent of their income.
7 Illinois Action for Children, Revisions to Child Care Assistance Program Administrative Rules, February 2016.
10 Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2015 Data Book.
11 Illinois Student Assistance Commission, FY2015 MAP Grant Survey, June 2016.
16 The Ounce, HIV Budget Fact Sheet, March 2016.