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**November 2, 2017**

## **Voices for Illinois Children Newsletter**

*From Voices President Tasha Green Cruzat*

Voices had a very busy October, with the release of two significant reports:

### **Illinois Kids Count 2017**

Every year, Voices analyzes the best available data to measure the educational, social and emotional, economic, and physical well-being of Illinois children. This year's *Illinois Kids Count* report focuses on education indicators, telling a strong story of opportunity, achievement, and attainment gaps in our state. Despite progress over time, we still have work to do to reduce systemic inequities and increase support for the children that need it the most. To build a future for Illinois where every child is a high achiever, we make four major recommendations to state leaders:

- Increase investments in quality early childhood education programs for low and middle-income children;
- Examine and address inequities in school resources, teacher and principal distribution, course rigor, and discipline practices;
- Coordinate support services so that every child has access to food, safe after-school programming, and mental and health services;
- Improve college access and completion rates.

The report and county-level factsheets, which can be accessed on the [Illinois Kids Count section](#) of our website, were well received across the state. Voices Board of Directors Vice Chair Bonnie Wheeler [hosted a press conference](#) in Carterville, highlighting the report's data from Southern Illinois. The Chicago Sun-Times also [did a feature](#) on the report and I had an opportunity to discuss the report on [WCIU-TV](#).



### **Race for Results**

Voices also partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to support the release of their [Race for Results](#) report, which finds that Illinois children of color continue to face barriers to success. The report examines national and state data on key

education, health, and economic milestones by racial and ethnic groups and uses an index to make comparisons.

On a scale of one (lowest) to 1,000 (highest), the report finds large disparities among the index scores between groups in Illinois. African American (327) and Latino (475) children trail White (766) and Asian and Pacific Islander (844) children on the path to opportunity. The report also provides data on the well-being of children in immigrant families and offers recommendations that put children at the center of policy development.

### **The Fragile State of Public Higher Education in Illinois**

Also in October, Voices analyst John Gordon looked at the state's [public higher education system](#). John looked at not only the budget cuts for this fiscal year (FY18) compared to FY15 but also at the enrollment declines at most of the state's institutions of higher learning.

### **Further budget cuts from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget**

The state of Illinois has a budget in place for the fiscal year but the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB) says it is out of balance by approximately \$1.7 billion dollars. As a result, GOMB put out a list of budget cuts last month totaling more than \$200 million. Just over \$89 million of that amount comes from the Illinois Department of Human Services including a \$4 million cut to Redeploy Illinois (a program of grants to counties for community services to help reduce juvenile detention) and a nearly \$7 million cut to Teen REACH (which provides after-school program services to high-risk youth). Furthermore, with a remaining \$1.5 billion deficit (according to GOMB), the administration has indicated more cuts will be necessary.

While the state needs to live within its means, it cannot squander the opportunities to improve the lives of our youth. If we continue down this path, the progress outlined in the *Illinois Kids Count* report may begin to disappear. Whether this fall, or during the upcoming spring legislative session, it is imperative that the Governor and General Assembly work together to move our state forward with the funding necessary to meet the educational, health, and human service needs of our children and their families.

As always, I appreciate your continued support of Voices for Illinois Children.

Sincerely,  
Tasha Green Cruzat  
President, Voices for Illinois Children



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