



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

[About](#) | [Donate](#) | [Upcoming Events](#)

January 18, 2018

Voices For Illinois Children Newsletter

From Voices President Tasha Green Cruzat

This past week, my travels took me from Washington to Washington. That is from Washington, Illinois to Washington, D.C. I stopped in Washington, Illinois for lunch on my way to Peoria. Washington, Illinois is in Tazewell County. There is some good news that Voices reported on for Tazewell County in our most recent Illinois KIDS COUNT report. For the year 2015 (the last available year for the data), only 2.1% of children in Tazewell County did not have health insurance. By contrast, an estimated 5.8% of children in the county in the year 2000 did not have health insurance. It is a real success story in the county as it is for children across Illinois.

Yet, travel to Washington, D.C. and you begin to get a very different picture. The federal government just enacted a tax reform package that will add at least \$1 trillion to the federal deficit in the next 10 years. Prior to passage, Congress adopted a budget resolution (which does not have the force of law) that provides an insight into how some of our elected officials plan to pay for the deficit increase. The resolution includes a cut of \$1.3 trillion for Medicaid, which has played a significant role in providing health insurance for more children.

Congress has not yet cut Medicaid funding. However, a complementary federal program that increases health care coverage for children is teetering. Full funding and reauthorization for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) expired on September 30, 2017. CHIP provides health insurance for children whose family income level is just above the threshold for Medicaid eligibility but who do not get health insurance through their employer or cannot purchase it on the private health insurance market. CHIP helps 9 million children nationally, including 326,000 in Illinois, obtain health insurance

The most recent federal stop-gap measure to fund the government through Friday included a temporary measure to keep CHIP running in the short term. There has been bipartisan support for the program since its creation. Most of the current dispute on reauthorization centers around how to pay for it. Illinois currently has a cushion with its remaining federal funds but not much of one. It is projected the state's federal funds for the program will run out by this June.

Voices will continue to [advocate for reauthorization of CHIP](#) and protection of Medicaid funds. We also recognize there is still work to be done in securing health care coverage for those children without it.

Partnership for America's Children

This month I began a three-year term on the board of the Partnership for America's Children. Formed in 2013, [the Partnership](#) is a network of state and community child advocacy organizations.

I'll be joining Mayra Alvarez of The Children's Partnership in California as a first-time board member. Among her professional accomplishments, Mayra served as the Director of the State Exchange Group for the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Reappointed to new terms on the board are Larry Marx and Melanie Bridgeforth. Larry is the executive director of The Children's Agenda in Rochester, New York. Prior to moving to Rochester in 2010, Larry served as Executive Director of Citizen Action, the largest public interest group in Wisconsin for 12 years. Melanie is the executive director of VOICES for Alabama's Children. In this capacity, she is not only the organization's lead spokesperson but also serves on several statewide councils including the State Children's Policy Council, the state Early Childhood Advisory Council, Alabama Literacy Alliance, and the Board of Directors for the Alabama School Readiness Alliance (ASRA).

I'm honored to have the opportunity to serve on the board with these and other individuals.

Voices Board member Beth Coulson

[Crain's Chicago Business](#), in conjunction with AARP Illinois, recently published [50@50+Illinois](#), which it describes as "50 people ages 50 and above making a big impact on Illinois while disrupting old attitudes about aging". On that list, Voices' board member Beth Coulson.

A former state legislator, physical therapist, and medical school professor, Beth serves on Voices' Executive, Resource Development, Board Governance and Nominating, and Policy and Advocacy Committees. Her commitment to community service is exemplified not only by her participation on the Voices' board but also by her work on the boards of Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Midwest High Speed Rail, Hondius Water Board, and the Tall Trees Flooding Committee. In addition, she is Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science.

Congratulations to Beth and thank you for all your efforts on behalf of Voices for Illinois Children.



Mailing address: WeWork, c/o **Voices for Illinois Children**
125 S. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60603
(312) 456-0600

You are subscribed to this organization's email list as . If you did not subscribe, or would no longer like to receive email updates, [unsubscribe here](#).