



May 24 2016

## **Child Care Awareness Week**

Every week in the United States, nearly 11 million children younger than age 5 are in some type of child care arrangement; on average, these children spend 36 hours a week in child care. While parents are children's first and most important teachers, child care programs provide early learning opportunities for millions of young children daily, having a profound impact on their development and readiness for school.

Various studies have shown that children in higher quality programs do better in school, are less likely to require special education services, are more likely to attend college, are more likely to earn higher wages and pay more in taxes, and are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system. Employers consistently report that the availability of quality child care improves productivity and reduces absenteeism and turnover by their employees.

The Week of the Young Child, held this year on April 10-16, 2016, is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

This spring, the Illinois House voted to pass my House Resolution 1014 to designate the fourth week of May 2016 as Child Care Awareness Week in the state of Illinois and to thank those men and women who care for the children of our state. It is fitting and proper that we fight to restore important elements of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that Governor Rauner changed by Executive Order last year.

The Illinois Department of Human Services' Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with access to quality, affordable child care, allowing them to continue working and improving the health, emotional and social development of children. Families are required to cost-share on a sliding scale based on family size, income and the number of children in care. In the spring of 2015, the CCAP budget was underfunded by almost \$300 million. In Illinois, there are more than 3,000 licensed day care centers, 8000 licensed day care homes and 700 group day care homes with a combined capacity to serve more than 255,000 children.

1. We call on the governor to fully return the eligibility level back to 185% of the poverty level – now it is at 162% of poverty level, leaving thousands of children ineligible for child care. We still have thousands of children without childcare because the governor will not fully reverse his Executive Order and return

the eligibility back to 185% of the poverty level.

2. We call attention to the slow processing of application paperwork which, in Cook County, is done by just one agency, Action for Children (AFC). We are working with AFC and the Department of Human Services (DHS) to speed up the processing and approval of applications. The amount of time taken for approval is at an all-time high in Cook County, and it is causing great hardships for both businesses and families.

3. We ask that the current redetermination process be ended - redetermination kicks families off the program when additional paperwork is not received. Determining eligibility should only be an annual process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District