



September 15, 2021

Supporting Families with Child Care

Almost three out of five low-income parents only have a high school degree or less. But many parents who want to improve their job skills can't enroll in education and training because they can't find or afford child care. Child care is expensive, subsidies are limited, and care is often not available during the evening and weekend hours when many parents need coverage. This week I stood with Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Grace Hou and Governor JB Pritzker to announce much needed support for children, families, and businesses across Illinois.

There are three parts of this support:

1. For Families: Expanding eligibility to those who are looking for a job – this group has never been eligible in Illinois previously. An Illinois family who can attest that they are looking for a job will be able to enroll their children in Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for up to 90 days. This comes at a critical time when additional unemployment benefits for some families have lapsed. The estimated cost is \$75M. DHS is coordinating with the Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and the Department of Employment Security (DES) on outreach for this program.
2. For Educators - a Child Care Workforce Bonus: This will be a one-time bonus payment of approximately \$1000 to child care staff at licensed child care centers, licensed child care homes, license-exempt child care homes that have completed health/safety training (requirement of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, or ARPA), and license-exempt child care centers (prorated based on CCAP enrollment). Payments will be made between October 2021 and March 2022. Total estimated cost is \$100M.
3. For Providers - Build Back Better Grants: These grants are meant to go beyond the child care restoration grants to support providers' ability to recruit and retain workers and improve quality using ARPA stabilization funds. Providers can begin applying in November and grants will be awarded January-September 2022 with a total of approximately \$300M available. These grants will be for licensed child care centers and homes only, with a focus on those who serve CCAP and don't have significant other funding sources. More details will be coming. A second group of grants build on the child care restoration grants, which Illinois put in place to stabilize child care provider operations beginning in July 2020 for a total of \$570M. The grants have been highly successful in preventing program closure—98% of licensed child care centers that received a grant in 2020 are still open and serving children; overall about 30% fewer child care centers closed in 2020-21 than closed, on average, each year in 2016-2018.

Let's support our families who are working and those who are looking for work by supporting the high-quality child care that their children need and deserve.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District