FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA
ILLINOIS

REPORT



# Illinois' Path to Prosperity

## Boost Early Learning to Cut Costs and Curb Crime

StrongNation.org/**FightCrime**

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## Acknowledgements

**Council for a Strong America** is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids**
Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime.

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# $3 billion

**By expanding preschool, Illinois could realize nearly $3 billion in benefits.**

Illinois spends billions of dollars a year on the costs of crime, adding to dire fiscal instability in our state. But the law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids know—from their personal experience and from research—that there is a better path: One of the best ways to keep young people from becoming criminals is to give them a foundation for success in their earliest years.

Currently, however, Illinois' children are entering kindergarten without that foundation. The 2019 Kindergarten Individual Development Survey asked teachers to assess children at the beginning of the school year, looking at math, language and literacy, and social-emotional development. **Thirty-nine percent of incoming students had not reached readiness in *any* of these three areas.**[1]

> We spend tens of millions locking up criminals. Investing in programs that keep kids from a life of crime can cut those costs and save lives.



**Hon. Mark Doran**
Ford County Sheriff



# Illinois spends $2.3 billion on prisons and jails each year

- Nationwide, **violent crime rose nearly 5 percent** from 2014 to 2018, and in 2018 there were 1.2 million violent crimes and 7.2 million property crimes committed.[2] **Illinois has more than 51,000 violent crimes annually**, a rate of 404 per 100,000 people (9 percent more than the overall U. S. rate of 369 per 100,000).[3]
- Illinois has about **41,000 adults incarcerated** in state prisons.[4]
- Nationally, we spend over $76 billion a year to incarcerate adults in federal and state prisons or local jails, including approximately $2.3 billion in Illinois.[5] In state prisons, **Illinois spends over $28,000 per inmate**, which is **over 6 times what is spent on preschool students** ($4,606 per pupil).[6]
- At least **48 percent of inmates in state prisons lack a high school diploma or GED**.[7]

Fortunately, we can steer thousands of children across Illinois toward school success and more productive lives through high-quality early education, which has been proven to help kids become kindergarten-ready and greatly reduce crime and its costs. The choice for Illinois is simple: Pay for high-quality early education programs now, or pay far more later for incarceration, property loss, and the devastating impact of violent crime on human lives.

## The Science Behind Early Childhood Education

The research behind the case for early childhood education shows that the first few years of life are a time of rapid brain development, and that more than one million new brain connections form every second during this period.[8] Early experiences play a large role in determining how brain connections are formed and in the "wiring" that becomes the foundation on which all later learning is built.

James Heckman, the Nobel Prize-winning economist from the University of Chicago, has conducted groundbreaking work with economists, statisticians and neuroscientists and has proven that the quality of early childhood development strongly influences health, social and economic outcomes. He argues that we should invest sufficiently in younger children and in providing "coaching" for their parents because those early investments will generate the greatest return. In fact, his research found that every dollar invested in birth-to-five programs demonstrates a return of up to $13.[9]

## High-Quality Early Education: A Path to Less Crime

Research has shown that high-quality early childhood education can result in more successful outcomes, particularly for at-risk children from low-income families.

### Better school performance

North Carolina's Smart Start and More at Four initiatives found that, by fifth grade, the children in counties that spent more per preschool student were two months ahead in reading—and 1.5 months ahead in math—when compared with children in counties that spent less.[10] Participants in the Tulsa, Oklahoma Head Start program had higher achievement scores in math in seventh grade, compared with non-participants.[11]

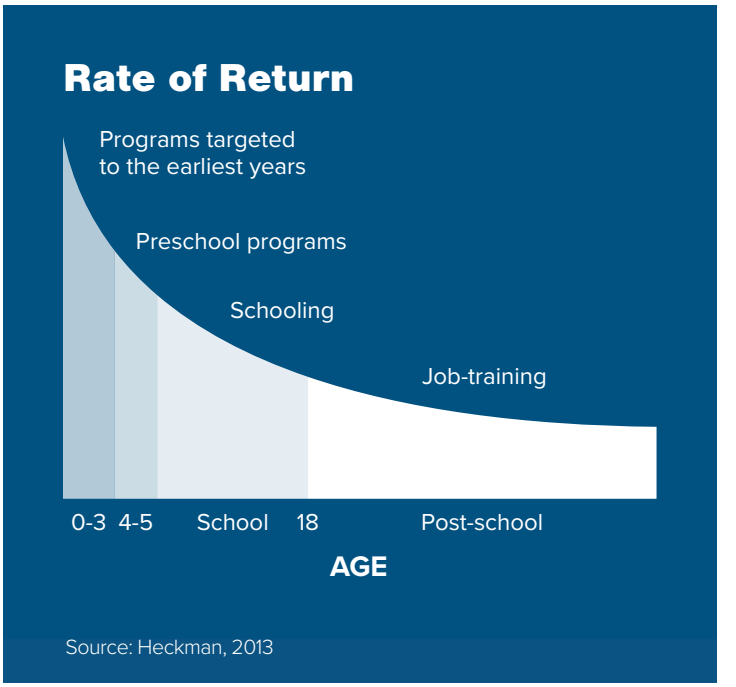
Participants in Michigan's state pre-K were held back in school 51 percent less often than non-participants.[12] New Jersey, which has followed its state preschool children through the fourth and fifth grades, found its children were held back 40 percent less often.[13]

### Fewer dropouts

The Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC) program reported a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rates among its participants.[14] Meanwhile, Michigan's pre-K program reported a 35 percent increase in on-time graduation, and an analysis of Head Start found that siblings who attended the program had an increased probability of graduating from high school compared with their siblings who did not attend.[15,16] These results are significant for crime prevention: An economic study found that a 10-percentage-point increase in graduation rates reduces murder and assault rates by about 20 percent.[17]

### Less crime and fewer prisoners

Children not served by the Chicago CPC program were **70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime** by age 18.[18] By age 24, the people served by the same program were 20 percent less likely to have served time in a jail or prison.[19] A recent study of Oklahoma's universal pre-K program found the program decreased the likelihood that black children were later charged with a misdemeanor or felony crime at age 18 or 19.[20]




> "I myself am the proud product of a Head Start program, and can attest to the lifelong benefits that come as a result of exposure to quality early education."



**Chief Mitchell Davis**
Hazel Crest Police Department

In sum, early childhood education programs can help set children on a path to productive adulthood.

## Quality is Key

Results from numerous rigorous studies should effectively end the debate on whether high-quality state preschool efforts can be brought to scale and deliver strong results.

To attain lasting results, programs must be high quality. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) lists 10 structural indicators of quality, focusing on teacher credentials and training, class size, teacher-child ratios, learning standards, screening and other services, and program oversight.[21] NIEER also argues that **high-quality preschool programs should be full-day**, based on results from a randomized trial that showed that children who participated in a full-day program improved more on vocabulary and math assessments than did children in a part-day program.[22]

The Illinois Preschool for All program meets eight of the 10 quality benchmarks established by NIEER, but **only one in 10 state preschool slots in FY19 were full-day**.[23]



## Strengthening parents

The most successful, evidence-based early childhood programs work *with* parents to teach and reinforce positive behaviors, such as routinely reading to and interacting with their children. High-quality early childhood programs partner with parents to improve their children's academic, health, and behavioral outcomes.

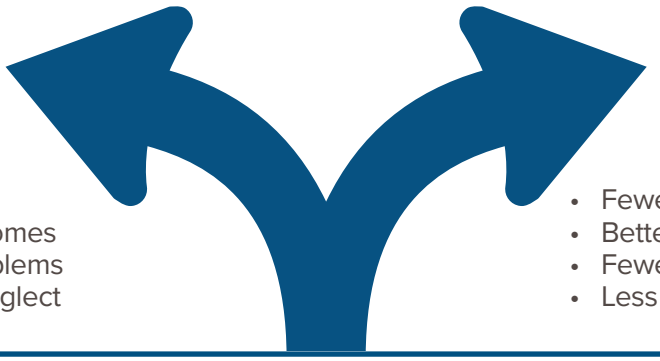
In Illinois, a number of birth-to-3 efforts provide such invaluable help to moms and dads on a voluntary basis. These include Prevention Initiative programs, as well as home-visiting services—such as Early Head Start, Healthy Families, Parents Too Soon, and Nurse-Family Partnership—that target assistance to new parents in at-risk households. Funding for these efforts comes from a variety of sources, including the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Human Services, and the federal Early Head Start and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting programs.

# Early Education and Care: The Right Direction for Illinois

**More Crime, More Prisoners**



- More dropouts
- Worse school outcomes
- More behavior problems
- More abuse and neglect



**More Graduates, More Productive Adults**



- Fewer dropouts
- Better school outcomes
- Fewer behavior problems
- Less abuse and neglect

## Early Education Workforce Development

The full potential of early childhood education will only be realized with a highly-qualified early childhood workforce, with adequate education, ongoing professional development, and sufficient compensation.

**Adequate Education:**
A comprehensive review of 48 studies by the Campbell Collaboration found that higher teacher-education levels have a strong relationship to higher quality in early childhood education.[24]

**Professional Development:**
Studies show that effective professional development is

- Classroom-focused: related to what teachers are actually teaching
- Active: allows for hands-on practice of skills
- Collaborative: with modelling and/or coaching of skills and feedback provided.[25]

**Compensation:**
Appropriate compensation is required to attract and retain a high-quality early childhood workforce.[26] In Illinois and nationwide, preschool teachers earn substantially less than kindergarten teachers.[27]



## Improving and Expanding Early Education in Illinois

In our state, 81,000 children attend high-quality, public state-sponsored pre-K, plus over 31,000 children attend Head Start—together representing just 34 percent of the 325,000 children 3 and 4 years old.[28]

In fact, **the funded capacity of publicly-funded preschool programs in Illinois leaves about 95,000 eligible 3- and 4-year-olds without access**.[29]

As Illinois looks to strengthen access it also needs to be sure that its programs have adequate funding and continue to follow the successful approaches that will help ensure high quality. Illinois must also rigorously measure results, so it can continually strive to attain even greater results going forward.

## Demonstrated Economic Benefits

A sophisticated meta-analysis of nearly 20 high-quality preschool programs for disadvantaged children demonstrated that high-quality pre-K returned an average "profit" (economic benefits minus costs) to society of almost $27,000 for every child served.[30] If Illinois can reach a goal of serving eight out of 10 of our disadvantaged children with full-day preschool, the state could realize **nearly $3 billion in societal benefits** over their lifetimes.[31] These economic benefits accrue due to increases in participants' future wages and reductions in the costs of future crime, of children being held back in school or receiving special education, and of health care and other societal expenditures. Clearly, preschool works and more than pays for itself.

## Early Learning Enjoys Bipartisan Support

The voice of law enforcement leaders has been key in educating the public about the crime-prevention and economic benefits of investments in children's earliest years. A 2018 poll shows that there is now widespread support for the programs covered in this report:[32]

- Two-thirds of American voters say that we need to do more to prepare children for kindergarten
- 55 percent support increasing federal funding for quality early education from birth to age 5
- 78 percent responded that it is important to provide voluntary home-visiting and parent-education programs

Moreover, early childhood is an issue that can bring together both parties in a spirit of collaboration, as it has here in Illinois. The same poll showed a substantial majority of Republican, Democratic, and Independent voters all support proposals that will help more families access high-quality early learning and care opportunities.

## Conclusion

Wise investments to expand access to and quality of early care and education opportunities for our disadvantaged children will pay off for years to come with more successful, productive adults and real savings for our state.

While Illinois has recently made progress expanding early education opportunities, there is still tremendous unmet need. In FY 2019, the state was only able to fund 64 percent of preschool funding requests from Illinois communities, and the vast majority of available slots were not for a full day. Substantial increases in investments—in preschool funding, in capital programs to provide the necessary physical space to serve 3- and 4-year-olds in need, and in the pipeline to deliver a qualified early education workforce—are necessary to serve the needs of Illinois children and families.

Law enforcement leaders also recognize that Illinois' early learning system has multiple components, with essential roles played by the Child Care Assistance Program, voluntary home-visiting services, and other important initiatives deserving substantial investment.

Illinois law enforcement leaders are committed to placing  criminals behind bars. They agree, however, that more is needed: One vital, cost-effective approach is to support measures that will prevent young children from growing up to become involved in crime.  When we invest in early childhood education, we put our children—and our state—on a path toward greater safety and prosperity.

## Endnotes


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**31** There are currently 132,340 children ages 3-4 that live at or below 200% of the federal poverty line in Illinois. [Data via Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map https://iecam.illinois.edu/] 80 percent of that is 105,872 children. This number multiplied by $26,802 (see previous footnote) is $2.84 billion over these childrens' lifetimes.

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