FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA

February 3, 2021

Honorable J.B. Pritzker, Governor
Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker, Illinois House of Representatives
Honorable Don Harmon, President, Illinois Senate
Honorable Jim Durkin, Minority Leader, Illinois House of Representatives
Honorable Dan McConchie, Minority Leader, Illinois Senate
Members of the Illinois General Assembly

Dear Illinois Leaders:

Illinois law enforcement professionals have consistently called for investments in children that are proven to reduce crime and violence in the long term. Yet we have seen the COVID pandemic greatly exacerbate the challenges facing children and their families. Trauma and other adverse childhood experiences can significantly impact a child's future. With smart investments for proven programs, however, many more of our kids can benefit from the soaring trajectory we all desire for them. That's good for taxpayers and great for public safety.

We, the undersigned law enforcement leaders, therefore commend you for the investments you made in the last legislative session and urge you to support the following crime-prevention priorities for Fiscal Year 2022. While the state's fiscal challenges are daunting, we know that the priorities outlined below are essential supports for children and families as we come out of this pandemic crisis. We also know that they can be cost-savers over time. The effects of the budget impasse just a few years ago shows us the painful costs of neglecting quality programs for kids.

(1) Support statewide initiatives to bolster early childhood care and education. There are ground-breaking, comprehensive efforts underway that will enhance the strength of current early childhood programming and aid in crime prevention.

a. The bipartisan **Early Childhood Funding Commission** will soon be presenting a roadmap toward achieving an adequate, stable, equitable, and efficient system of supporting early care and education statewide. We commend its work and look forward to working with you to move its recommendations forward over the next several years.

b. The **Illinois PN3 Coalition** has set an ambitious goal to expand high-quality services to thousands more low-income infants, toddlers, and their families by 2025. The FY22 budget requests below incorporate interim steps toward meeting that goal.

c. With the **Illinois Legislative Black Caucus** leading the way, the General Assembly moved forward with an education reform package that will enhance early learning opportunities for young children. This includes increasing the availability of early childhood mental health consultation services for educators and providers — a measure that can significantly reduce pre-kindergarten expulsions.

(2) Improve voluntary preschool and birth-to-3 opportunities by increasing the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) to at least $594 million. Research shows that high-quality preschool and birth-to-3 programs can help dramatically reduce future crime and its attendant costs. While our state has made real progress in support of these programs, we still have a long way to go before all families have access to quality preschool for their 3- and 4-year-olds — including full-day options. The effects of our current underinvestment are seen as early as kindergarten, when only three in 10 kindergarteners are deemed fully "ready" for school by their teachers, with consequences that can continue into adulthood. We endorse a $50 million increase for preschool and birth-to-3 services in the ECBG, as recommended by the Illinois State Board of Education.

(3) Increase support for home-visiting programs in the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) budget for new and expectant parents by appropriating **$20.9 million** for **Healthy Families Illinois** and **Parents Too Soon.** These community-based programs provide "parent-coaching" for families facing adverse conditions, and can reduce parental involvement in crime, lower rates of abuse and neglect, boost the ensuing academic

achievement of participants' children, and help curtail abuse of substances such as opioids in the long run. This $4 million budget increase would put Illinois on a trajectory to reach the PN3 Coalition's goal of reaching an additional 15,000 children and families by 2025. We also urge passage of HB 354 to expand the Illinois Medicaid program to include coverage for home-visiting services.

(4) **Fully support the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) with at least $431 million in funding.** CCAP helps the working families of tens of thousands of children to afford care. Child care has been hammered as much as any other sector of the economy by the pandemic, and rebuilding the system has to be a top priority so that parents — including those who work in law enforcement and other first responders — can work. We commend Illinois leaders for helping child care providers weather the COVID storm thus far, but the need for continued, enhanced assistance will remain for at least the next year. The time has also come to wrestle with the pervasively low wages in the child care sector, as we begin moving towards a system that truly works for families, providers, and the early childhood workforce.

(5) **Increase funding for Teen REACH afterschool programs in the IDHS budget to $19.6 million and maintain afterschool funding in the ISBE budget at $20 million.** High-quality afterschool programs reduce crime by providing safe, enriching environments during the "prime time for juvenile crime" after the school bell rings. During the pandemic, many of these programs have adapted in creative ways to provide additional supports for young people who are studying remotely throughout the school day. We urge a $5.1 million increase for Teen REACH as well as level funding for afterschool programs serving mostly students from low-income families.

(6) **Continue funding of $6.37 million for juvenile Redeploy Illinois in the IDHS budget.** Redeploy Illinois cuts recidivism and saves money by contracting with counties to provide support and accountability for juvenile offenders in their home communities, instead of sending them to a Department of Juvenile Justice prison facility. This highly effective initiative continues to recover from the recent state budget impasse, with many counties reluctant to reengage in an effort that suffered greatly when bills were not being paid. We urge IDHS to continue outreach and reengagement with counties.

When it comes to safeguarding our communities, we can and should go beyond arrests and prosecutions. Prevention is another key, public-safety tool, and merits support as such. We, the undersigned, know from years of crime-fighting experience that wise investments can give kids a solid foundation for a safe and productive life. We thank you for this opportunity to provide our perspective, and look forward to working with you to build a secure and flourishing future for Illinois. We would welcome discussing these priorities with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Hon. Robert Berlin
DuPage County State's Attorney

Chief Steven Casstevens
Buffalo Grove Police Department

Hon. Tom Dart
Cook County Sheriff

Chief Mitchell Davis
Hazel Crest Police Department

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Ford County Sheriff

Hon. Bruce Kettelkamp
Christian County Sheriff

Chief Robert Marshall
Naperville Police Department

Chief Daniel O'Shea
Rockford Police Department

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Livingston County State's Attorney

(more)

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Parkland College

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Quincy Police Department

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Woodridge Police Department

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Palatine Police Department

Chief Bruce Dayno
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Chatham Police Department

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Marengo Police Department

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Edwardsville Police Department

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Roselle Police Department

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Yorkville Police Department

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Pulaski County Sheriff

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Carroll County Sheriff

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Lockport Police Department

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Metropolis Dept. of Public Safety

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Minooka Police Department

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Springfield Park District

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North Chicago Police Department

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Swansea Police Department

Chief Frank Kaminski
Park Ridge Police Department

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State Attorney Andrew Koester
Clay County State's Attorney

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Vermilion County State's Attorney

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Burr Ridge Police Department

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Park Forest Police Department

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Lemont Police Department

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Alsip Police Department

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Kane County State's Attorney

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Tinley Park Police Department
Elmhurst Police Department

Chief Jennifer Paulus
Hawthorn Woods Police Dept.

(more)

Chief Phillip Perlini
Grayslake Police Department

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Melrose Park Police Department

Chief Sean Reynolds
Salem Police Department

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Jersey County Sheriff

Hon. Neal Rohlfing
Monroe County Sheriff

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Spring Grove Police Department

Chief Samuel Sinacore
Tower Lakes Police Department

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Woodford County Sheriff

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Indian Head Park Police Department

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Peoria Heights Police Department

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Ogle County Sheriff

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Rock Island County State's Attorney

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Elk Grove Village Police Dept.

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Sauk Village Police Department

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Springfield Police Department

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Sangamon County State's Attorney

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McDonough County Sheriff

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Champaign County State's Attorney

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Sugar Grove Police Department

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Warren County State's Attorney

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Rock Island Police Department

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Lake Forest Police Department

Chief Dave Weigand
Crestwood Police Department

Chief Ron Wilke
Lisle Police Department

Chief Jim Winters
Sycamore Police Department

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Williamson County State's Attorney

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Bourbonnais Police Department

Chief LaDon Reynolds
Oak Park Police Department

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Marshall County Sheriff

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Maywood Police Department

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Chief David Wermes
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Richton Park Police Department

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Illinois Assoc. of Chiefs of Police

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Aurora Police Department