

ILLINOIS

January 4, 2023

Honorable J.B. Pritzker, Governor
Honorable Emanuel “Chris” Welch, Speaker, Illinois House of Representatives
Honorable Don Harmon, President, Illinois Senate
Honorable Tony McCombie, Minority Leader, Illinois House of Representatives
Honorable John Curran, Minority Leader, Illinois Senate
Members of the Illinois General Assembly

Dear Illinois leaders,

Amidst growing concerns over crime and violence in communities statewide, we write as a bipartisan group of Illinois law enforcement leaders to recommend a number of significant, long-term crime prevention priorities for inclusion in the state’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget. We are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, an organization of over 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors nationwide with 320 members here in Illinois. We are united in our belief that meaningfully improving public safety requires public investments in research-backed programs that support young people and prevent them from becoming involved in crime. The funding priorities we highlight below are incredibly important to us as we work to address ongoing public safety concerns in our own communities.

Priorities impacting young children

We join a wide range of partners to propose **a 20% funding increase in a variety of critical early childhood programs** housed within the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Among other things, we view this increase as redoubling our commitment toward realization of the long-term recommendations of Illinois’ bipartisan Early Childhood Funding Commission. The commission has noted our state’s early care and education services are funded at only 14% of actual needs. While we are grateful that some initiatives received increased support in FY23, more significant investments must be made to ensure children and families can access key resources at a time when only three in 10 Illinois young people are entering school fully prepared for kindergarten. Similarly, we support the crucial, birth-to-3 goals of the Raising Illinois coalition. Our top early childhood priorities for FY24 include:

- **Increase the Early Childhood Block Grant (ISBE) by \$119.6 million** – The block grant provides critical birth-to-3 and preK services to tens of thousands of Illinois children. Our hope is that increased resources for this initiative will be utilized to increase program quality and equity by providing increased compensation for hardworking teachers and staff who are consistently underpaid. Other needs include opening further full-day preschool slots and expanding the support services of the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation project.

- **Increase home-visiting programs (IDHS) by \$3.6 million** – Efforts such as Healthy Families and Maternal Child Home Visiting provide “coaching” to expecting and new parents in high-risk situations. These initiatives have been shown to reduce the likelihood that children will experience abuse and neglect, and can be particularly impactful in reducing addiction by directing parents to treatment and reducing the likelihood that children will experience Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which research shows are a predictor of future drug use. (These are reasons we similarly support utilizing some of the settlement funding provided to the state from recent lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors for home-visiting initiatives, as well as the Early Intervention services noted below.)
- **Increase Child Care Assistance Program (IDHS) by \$82.1 million** – CCAP provides child care help for the working parents of approximately 100,000 children from birth to age 12, statewide. High-quality child care has consistently been shown to improve educational and behavioral outcomes for children, which in turn reduces the likelihood that they will become involved in crime.
- **Increase Early Intervention (IDHS) by \$23.2 million** – EI services include physical, speech, occupational, and other vital therapies for infants and toddlers experiencing developmental disabilities or delays, including some that are related to opioid exposure. These therapies can ensure that young people have an equitable opportunity to get a strong start in life.

Priorities impacting school-aged children and youth

- **Increase Teen REACH (IDHS) by \$2.8 million** – This growth in resources would restore these crucial, afterschool services closer to the maximum funding level they saw years ago, before significant cuts. After years of stagnation and little growth, this would help provide more young people with access to these vital efforts and increase compensation for historically underpaid staff.
- **Maintain school-based afterschool services (ISBE) at \$20 million** – This funding provides safe and productive alternatives for kids during what we as law enforcement leaders call “the prime time for juvenile crime.”
- **Increase Community Schools (ISBE) by \$15 million** – Community Schools address external challenges that prevent students from succeeding, inside and outside the classroom. Law enforcement leaders support Community Schools because they provide students with the additional assistance they need to stay in school, succeed academically, and avoid behavioral issues and later involvement in crime.
- **Maintain Redeploy Illinois (IDHS) at \$14.4 million** – We request that you at least maintain the current level of resources dedicated to these services, with an aim of growing them over time. Redeploy cuts recidivism and saves money by providing effective support and accountability for young offenders in their home communities, instead of sending them to a Department of Juvenile Justice prison facility.

If we want to meaningfully address the significant public safety issues facing our state, we must consider long-term, research-supported solutions that focus on prevention. We hope that you will keep these priorities in mind as you make budget decisions for FY24. If we can be a resource to you or if you would like to meet with local law enforcement leaders to discuss these issues further, please do not hesitate to contact Sean Noble, Illinois State Director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, at snoble@fightcrime.org or 312-288-8229.

Sincerely,

Hon. Robert Berlin
DuPage County State's Attorney

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Cook County Sheriff

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East Dundee Police Department

Hon. Richard Watson
St. Clair County Sheriff

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Posen Police Department

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Riverwoods Police Department

Hon. Douglas Dyhrkopp
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Attorney

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Attorney

Chief Anthony Gorski
West Dundee Police
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Crestwood Police Department

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Riverside Police Department
(Retired)

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Executive Director, Illinois
Association of Chiefs of Police

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Taylorville Police Department

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Sycamore Police Department

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Sangamon County State's Attorney