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

June 30, 2017

Honorable Bruce Rauner, Governor
207 Statehouse
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Rauner:

As Illinois sheriffs, police chiefs, state's attorneys, crime survivors, and leaders of law enforcement organizations, we know that quality preschool and child care can set children on the right path in life, create safer communities, and save our state money down the line.

With this in mind, we request that you sign two bills that were recently sent to you with overwhelming, bipartisan support: **House Bills 2663 and 3213**. The Illinois State Senate, recognizing that both these measures will provide essential supports for young children and their families, *unanimously* passed both pieces of legislation.

**HB2663** would provide protections against expulsion and suspension for children in publicly-funded preschool and child care, and ensure that early childhood professionals have necessary resources to support children's social and emotional health. Providing children and teachers with the support they need, and keeping young children with challenging behaviors in quality early education programs, will put those children on a path toward productive adulthood.

A recent FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS report found that children in public preschools are over three times more likely to be expelled than children in kindergarten through 12th grades, and that the risk of expulsion in child care programs is up to 13 times higher than in public K-12 schools. This is extremely concerning to law enforcement professionals, because we know that it is the children most at risk for expulsion who can chiefly benefit from the research-proven benefits of early education.

Evidence-based supports for teachers and child care providers, as referenced in the bill, have been shown to reduce the stress and improve the teaching skills of early childhood education staff; significantly decrease children's acting-out behavior; reduce expulsions; and improve the learning environment for all children in the early childhood setting.

**HB3213** would increase access to the child care assistance program, restoring eligibility for the low-income parents of more than 4,000 kids statewide. These parents, who are enrolled in approved full-time education and training programs, lost their longstanding access to child care assistance in 2015.

Child care programs are a significant component of the early learning system: high-quality care can be as educational as good preschool programs, and child care often helps families access half-day prekindergarten services. Families who seek to improve their job opportunities through training and education should once again gain access to financial assistance.

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Law enforcement leaders have long known that giving kids the right start in life is the best way to prevent crime and violence. Both these bills — **2663** and **3213 —** will increase access to early childhood education for *all* kids, and will help ensure safer, healthier communities in Illinois in the coming decades. We hope that you, as a supporter of early childhood education, will sign them into law.

We look forward to continuing to partner with you on the best crime prevention strategies for Illinois.

Sincerely,

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