Governor Pritzker Announces Expanded Assistance for Illinois Child Care Providers

Press Release - Wednesday, December 23, 2020

CHICAGO— Governor JB Pritzker today announced the administration is directing additional funding to support child care providers that are part of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) which helps low-income working families access high-quality childcare, impacting 100,000 children annually. The administration will utilize funding allocated to Illinois through the federal CARES Act to cover all eligible days of CCAP payments for December, January, and February regardless of attendance.

"Our lives are full of so many unknowns right now - and our childcare services know that all too well. From staff calling in sick or staying home to take care of their own families, to concerns about community transmission, to families pulling their kids out of care - these tumultuous times have rained down in multiple ways upon our early childhood network of providers. I wanted to make it easier for them, so we can make sure childcare is available to parents who need it," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "As we face down this pandemic winter, Illinois is going to step in and help all providers in our Child Care Assistance Program secure a little more stability and flexibility just as we did in the spring. The state will cover all eligible days of CCAP payments for December, January, and February, no matter what your attendance looks like - and all that's required is for providers to submit a simple waiver form."

"Governor Pritzker knows the importance of protecting early childhood programs and the workforce that powers it - childcare providers, teachers, and other caregivers. As we head into the winter months, this funding will help businesses across the state survive what continues to be a very tough road during the COVID-19 pandemic. The members of our childcare network are essential workers, and this is a positive step towards economic recovery," **said Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Grace Hou.**

Earlier this year, the Pritzker administration provided $270 million in relief funding to child care providers across the state as part of Illinois' Business Interruption Grant Program, the largest business-relief program in the nation. The state is dedicating an additional $20 million in funding from the CARES Act to provide aid to additional providers in Illinois.

"This is so important for us to be able to support and advocate for children of the communities we serve. These changes give us the flexibility to run our programs during very challenging times for so many. These policies are a chance to take away penalties that organizations would be facing in the wake of COVID-19 and also relieves parents from a burden as so many have had to adjust their schedules and make the necessary changes to keep their families healthy," **said Maricela Garcia, Chief Executive Officer at Gads Hill Center.** "It's evident that families are watching the positivity

rates and we have seen attendance really fluctuate to keep safety as the priority, but we are looking forward to keep serving the children we care for every day."

The recently announced initiative will offer relief to thousands of providers, especially in communities of color that have been hardest hit during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As of last month, 98,000 children were enrolled in CCAP.

Support for eligible child care providers include:

- The state will pay for all eligible days of childcare regardless of the child's attendance. These changes are effective for December, January, and February to help providers maintain financial stability.

- The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the agency responsible for the licensing of child care programs, will return all licensed family child care providers to full capacity in December and licensed child care centers will return to full capacity in early January, if the COVID-19 rolling positivity rate remains below 9%.

- The purchase and distribution of PPE to childcare providers across the state.

IDHS' Office of Child Care administers the Child Care Program to provide low-income, working families with access to quality, affordable child care that allows them to continue working and contributes to the healthy, emotional and social development of the child. Families can stay connected with the program on the **Child Care Assistance Program Facebook** or at the **IDHS website**.

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