PRITZKER ADMINISTRATION TO PROVIDE $270 MILLION IN ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS

Press Release - Friday, July 24, 2020

CHICAGO - Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) today announced $270 million in funding is available to assist child care providers across the state with reopening in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting today, licensed child care providers that meet the eligibility criteria may apply for Child Care Restoration Grants, reserved as part of the $636 Business Interruption Grants (BIG) program. The application will remain open until August 14, 2020 and is available online at: **https://www.inccrra.org/**.

The new childcare grants program leverages funds received from the CARES Act - making Illinois the only state to dedicate this level of federal aid for childcare programs.

"Families in every community across our state rely on the services of childcare providers so that they can go to work and have confidence that their child receives the support needed to grow and thrive," **said Governor Pritzker.** "With many child care programs beginning to reopen for the first time since the COVID-19 crisis began, my administration has dedicated funding to help offset the losses these programs have faced and to ensure that working families can continue to depend on them."

Since the onset of the crisis, the majority of child care programs have been closed, with the exception of providers who served children of essential workers. This new grant funding opportunity created jointly with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and administered by IDHS will offer relief to child care programs, with priority given for child care businesses serving disproportionately Impacted Areas (DIAs), representing those communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As workplaces reopen, so many employees need child care to go back to work," **said Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary, Grace Hou.** "These grants are designed to support the health of our child care infrastructure, so they can help working families return to their jobs."

New funding for child care providers is part of the $636 million Business Interruption Grant (BIG) program, an economic recovery program, geared toward deploying emergency assistance for businesses facing the most extreme economic hardships as a result of the ongoing pandemic. Recognizing that childcare for working families is imperative to the reopening of the state, the program dedicates a significant portion for childcare businesses. BIG funds will support childcare facilities returning to full operation as quickly as possible.

Businesses eligible for the Child Care Restoration Grants (CCRG) Program must demonstrate the following:

1. A current license from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to care for children,
2. They are open and caring for children at the time of application,
3. Based on licensed capacity, can demonstrate a 'business interruption' from their pre-COVID capacity, and
4. Submit a complete application with all required documents.

Application and administration of the program will be led by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), who will accept applications, provide technical assistance to providers, and oversee payment for successful applicants.

"We are very grateful for the Pritzker Administration's ongoing commitment to providing Illinois families with access to high-quality early childhood education and care, and we are delighted to be able to assist in those efforts by administering the Child Care Restoration Grant Program. This critical funding will provide significant support to child care providers and help preserve the early learning infrastructure upon which children and families depend," **said Dan Harris, Executive Director, Illinois Network of Child Care.**

"With many Illinois businesses currently facing unprecedented burdens as a result of COVID-19, BIG grants can be a lifeline for many working to meet their obligations, protect their employees and reopen safely," **said Michael Negron, Acting Director of DCEO.** "These latest BIG grants in partnership with IDHS play a crucial role in the greater reopening plan by ensuring that child care center doors remain open as we bring more Illinoisans back to work."

"Families across the state are struggling. Child care providers are also struggling during this economic crisis. It's our responsibility to support caregivers and help our community partners deliver critical supports to families during these challenging times," **said Senator Sara Feigenholtz (D-6th District).**

"Our local caregiving business are among the businesses that have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 crisis, and if we don't find ways to support them, these businesses that are critical to so many will face even greater challenges and possibly have to close their doors. These grants are another means to help them stay on their feet," **said Representative LaShawn K. Ford (D-8th District).**

From the onset of the crisis, the Pritzker administration has worked to assist businesses impacted by the pandemic. DCEO recently launched a first round of BIG funding for small businesses, making $60 million available for up to 3,500 businesses impacted by COVID-19. Businesses given priority in this first round include: restaurants and bars; salons and barbers; gyms and fitness centers; and businesses located in a DIA. A second round of BIG funds for small businesses will include additional sectors that have been significantly affected by the pandemic.

For more information, visit **www.inccrra.org**.

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