

# CREATING EARLY EDUCATION ACCESS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES HB4242 (HA1)

REP. LAKESIA COLLINS

FLOWERS - CASSIDY - WILLIS, MOELLER, LAPOINTE, HIRSCHAUER, GREENWOOD, GABEL, STAVA-MURRAY, NICHOLS AND GUZZARDI

Young children ages 0-5 comprise nearly half of all DCFS involved children in Illinois. Research shows that early exposure to abuse and neglect can severely damage the architecture of the developing brain. Providing young children access to comprehensive, high-quality early care and education services represents a critical opportunity for mitigating the effects of trauma on the developing brain.

Unfortunately, despite a strong history of collaboration between the early care and education and child welfare systems, and systems in place to identify and enroll children and families with DCFS involvement in high-quality early care and education programs, data show that not enough children involved in the child welfare system are receiving those critical services. Fragmentation across these two complex systems creates many barriers to access for both families and the professionals working with families.

## SOLUTION

**Make families involved in the child welfare system automatically eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**

DCFS manages the provision of childcare services for several thousand children without the support of our state's child care infrastructure at IDHS. **HA1 to HB4242 would:**

- ▶ Make **foster parents** automatically eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), regardless of employment or education/training status.
- ▶ Make **parenting youth in care** automatically eligible for CCAP, regardless of employment or education/training status, and provide an additional eligibility period after their DCFS case closes.
- ▶ Make **parents of children who are subjects of pending cases under the Juvenile Court Act** automatically eligible for CCAP, regardless of employment or/education training status.
- ▶ Make **families with older children who have an open intact family services case**, and not just those under the age of 5, automatically eligible for CCAP.
- ▶ Make **families receiving Extended Family Support Program services** automatically eligible for CCAP, regardless of employment or education/training status.

Extending eligibility to the Care Assistance Program (CCAP) for DCFS-involved families would improve their child care experience while streamlining the reimbursement process for providers. The change would be in step with recent shifts toward a more consolidated governance structure for the state's early childhood system, such as the creation of the IDHS Division of Early Childhood.

In FY22, the ILGA appropriated \$38 million to DCFS (Protective/Family Maintenance Day Care) for "Day Care services." This funding could shift to IDHS to defray the cost of expanding CCAP eligibility.

The new law would go into effect July 1, 2023, leaving ample time to plan for the transition.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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