



**Children's Advocates
for Change**

Championing the Well-Being of Illinois' Children

www.childrensadvocates.org

April/May Newsletter



Message from the President Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat

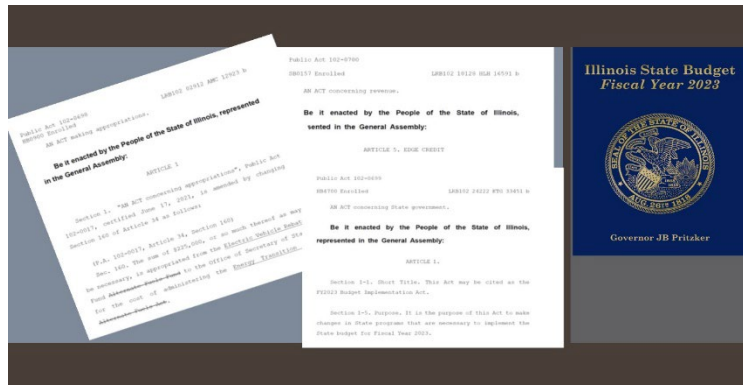
This spring marks the one-year anniversary of Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signing into law a state [Racial Impact Note Act](#). It provides a valuable tool for having legislators more closely examine whether proposed legislation could widen or eliminate racial and ethnic disparities that exist with respect to the subject matter of the bill.

While legislators made a few requests for such impact notes during the recently concluded spring legislative session, we are unaware of any Racial Impact Notes filed in the General Assembly. We strongly encourage legislators to make use of this statute, one of the nation's most comprehensive, to provide the data and frame of reference that will allow all Illinois children and families to thrive.

Only a handful of states have laws regarding racial impact statements or notes. In the next year, we hope to further spread the word about Illinois' law and encourage elected officials across the country to pass such laws in their states. Such laws hold the prospect of fostering greater opportunities for everyone.

Budget Review

The Illinois General Assembly has wrapped up its 2022 Spring Legislative Session with approval of a \$46 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which starts July 1, and a set of tax relief measures worth \$1.8 billion.



Children’s Advocates for Change’s Vice-President for Public Policy, Mitch Lifson, has been going through the approved budget package. It includes an expansion of the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit, a one-time property tax rebate, a 25% increase to the state’s Monetary Award Program (which provides college grants for Illinois residents), an additional \$250 million for the Department of Children and Family Services, and more. You can read his [blog post](#) on our website.

Children's Mental Health

This is National Mental Health Awareness Month. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis of adolescent mental health data from January-June 2021 shows “more than one in three high school students (37.1%) experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, 44.2% of students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, almost 20% seriously considered suicide, and 9.0% attempted suicide during the 12 months before the survey”. (https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/su/su7103a3.htm?s_cid=su7103a3_w#T2_down)

The approved state budget includes funding to fully implement the Pathways to Success Program for children with serious mental illnesses. In March, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker announced the Children's Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative to evaluate the delivery of behavioral health services for Illinois youth. The Initiative is to produce a report by the end of this year that will provide a blueprint for a coordinated, interagency approach to meet the behavioral health needs of young people. In appropriation hearings this spring, the Department of Children and Family Services indicated limited availability of such services in parts of the state. Meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents needs to be a key component of the plan.

Youth Public Policy Leadership Committee Program

Children's Advocates for Change is proud to once again team up with Christ the King Jesuit College Prep on Chicago's West Side for our Youth Public Policy Leadership Committee Program. Currently, we are training 40 students in the communications and advocacy skills to become more effective spokespeople for their communities. Under the program, students have the chance to state their issues of concern and make requests for public policy changes directly to elected officials. We've got some great young leaders ready to make a difference!



New Board Chair



This spring marks a change in leadership at Children's Advocates for Change. [Dr. Gwendolyn Oglesby-Odom](#) is the new chair of the organization's Board of Directors. Dr. Oglesby-Odom is the Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President at Advocate Aurora Health's Trinity Hospital. She takes over as Board Chair from Christa Markgraff, who will remain on the Board. We want to thank Christa for helping launch Children's Advocates for Change and all the associated challenges. Her dedication to the cause of our youth is what helps drive us to see that every child in this state has the opportunity to flourish in life.

I'm a Children's Advocate for Change.



Join our Gallery of Advocates!

We've also marked this season of renewal by refreshing our website. Check it out and while you are there consider joining our [Gallery of Children's Advocates for Change](#). Let everyone know you support our children and want to see that they get all the resources they need to flourish in life.



City Club of Chicago's Impact 2022 Panel

CAFC President Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat, Board Member Dr. Teresa Cordova, and Jacki Robinson-Ivy at City Club of Chicago where Dr. Cordova moderated an April discussion on economic trends and development opportunities on Chicago's west side.

Robert Ayres

We are deeply saddened to report that Robert Ayres, who assisted us with our accounting needs, has passed away. Rob worked for Nicor Gas. A resident of Plainfield, he was involved with Plainfield soccer, served as a Commissioner on the Plainfield Park District Board, and volunteered his time for Children's Advocates for Change. Our thoughts and wishes are with his wife and family.

Donate Today!

Our efforts at Children's Advocates for Change would not be possible without your financial support. It is what enables us to conduct the Youth Public Policy Leadership Committee Program, tax and budget analysis, policy development, and advocacy for measures such as the Racial Impact Note Act. Please consider making a donation today to Children's Advocates for Change. Just go to our [donation page](#) to make your contribution. In advance, thank you!



© Children's Advocates for Change 2022. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

125 S. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60603