

Winter Newsletter



Message from the President
Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat

Dear Friends,

In the next few weeks, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker will outline his proposed Fiscal Year 2024 state budget to the Illinois General Assembly. The Governor took the oath office for a second term on January 9th and in his remarks indicated that some of his top goals were making preschool available to every family, eliminating childcare deserts, and making college more affordable. Those are all goals Children's Advocates for Change (CAFC) supports, and we look forward to hearing more of the details in the Governor's budget address.

At CAFC, we've also been thinking about the upcoming legislative session and one of our top priorities is establishing a state child tax credit. The results of the enhanced federal child tax credit in 2021 (unfortunately for only one year) are indisputable. Combined with other federal COVID-19 economic relief measures, the nation's child poverty rate declined by nearly half. With the expiration of the enhancement, an estimated 671,000 Illinoisans are no longer able to take full advantage of the federal tax credit. Yet, for many of these families inflation (at 6.5% for the 12 months ending

in December) continues to eat away at earnings making the purchase of basic household items difficult.

The state can also ease the burden of many low- and moderate-income families by providing an income tax credit for renters. The state allows qualifying homeowners to take a credit of 5% of one's property tax bill against the taxpayer's income tax liability. However, renters don't get similar relief. According to PolicyLink, 57% of Black Illinois renters versus 42% of white Illinois renters spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs in 2019.

For many Illinois families, 2023 will still be a difficult year financially. A state child tax credit and an income tax credit for renters would not only provide economic relief to Illinois working families but also promote greater racial and ethnic equity given disparities in household income.

The Governor is scheduled to give his budget address on February 15th. CAFC will be looking to see how his proposed budget provides further economic assistance to Illinois families and working with legislators during the current General Assembly session to promote racial and ethnic equity in state budgeting. We'll have a blog post analyzing the FY24 proposed budget after the Governor's address.

While we're working on 2023 measures, we took some time recently to look back at 2022. On our website, you will find [Children's Advocates for Change's 2022 Annual Report](#). It was a busy year. There was:



- A policy paper on meeting the mental health needs of youth (which you can find [here](#))



- Three Helen R. Weigle Policy Forums (on [youth mental health](#), [maternal health and mortality disparities](#), and [family economic supports](#))



- Legislative testimony



- Training of more than 75 individuals as part of our Youth Public Policy Leadership Program



- Several other public presentations and webinars (including one on [Racial Impact Note Acts](#))

We hope you'll take a look at our report.

Not only has the Governor begun his second term but the 103rd Illinois General Assembly is underway. The composition of the Senate is 40 Democrats and 19 Republicans. In the House, the composition is currently 78 Democrats and 38 Republicans. As of this writing, there are two vacancies after two Republicans submitted their resignations in advance of the Wednesday, January 11th General Assembly inauguration: Representative Jim Durkin (R) and Representative Thomas Bennet (R). Former Representative Bennett is now Senator Bennett. Party chairs in the Bloomington area appointed him to fulfill the term of Senator Jason Barickman after Barickman announced he would not serve the term he won last November.

Senate members re-elected Senator Don Harmon as the Senate President. House members re-elected Representative Emanuel “Chris” Welch as the House Speaker.

Before adjourning the 102nd Illinois General Assembly, legislators passed several measures including:

Paid Leave: [SB 208](#) provides most employees in the state with a minimum of 40 hours of paid leave during a 12-month period beginning in 2024. The paid leave accrues at a rate of one hour of paid leave for every 40 hours worked (up to 40 hours of paid family leave). Employers can provide additional hours. An employee can use the paid leave for any reason. Employees can begin using the paid leave hours earned under the bill's provisions starting on the 90th day of employment. However, employers may allow workers to begin using the time earlier. Other provisions apply.

Assault Weapons Ban: [HB 5471](#) (signed into law on January 10th) establishes a statewide ban on the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. The bill contains a list of the banned weapons. Under the bill's provisions, current owners of assault weapons may continue to possess them as long as the owner provides an affidavit to the state police prior to January 1, 2024, that includes the owner's Firearm Owner's Identification Card number and the serial number of the

weapon. The bill includes certain exceptions to the provisions on the purchase or possession of assault weapons such as for law enforcement officers or members of the armed services.

Eight other states have in some fashion bans on the sale of assault weapons. Already, opponents of the new Illinois law have filed several lawsuits. On Friday, a judge in Effingham County issues a temporary restraining order regarding the law but it only applies to the more than 850 individuals and four licensed gun dealers who are part of the lawsuit.

As you can see from this newsletter, we've got a busy year ahead. Consider a contribution today to help fund our policy work and advocacy efforts. Please visit <https://childrensadvocates.org> and click on the donate button.



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