

June 16, 2023



Championing the Well-Being of Illinois' Children
www.childrensadvocates.org

Spring Newsletter



Message from the President
Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat

Dear Friends,

I'm happy to tell you that Children's Advocates for Change (CAFC) is now part of the [Partnership for America's Children Network](#). The Partnership represents 48 state and local child advocacy organizations in 38 states. Not only are there opportunities to share advocacy activities and experiences across the network, but we also have the chance to join other members in raising our collective voices for those programs and services children need to thrive. We're honored to be part of the network.

We also value our partnerships within the state. This spring, we worked alongside the Economic Security Project, the Shriver Foundation, the Latino Policy Forum, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Children's Home and Aid, and others to convince the Illinois General Assembly to approve a refundable child tax credit. Unfortunately, it was not part of the final budget package the legislature approved last month.

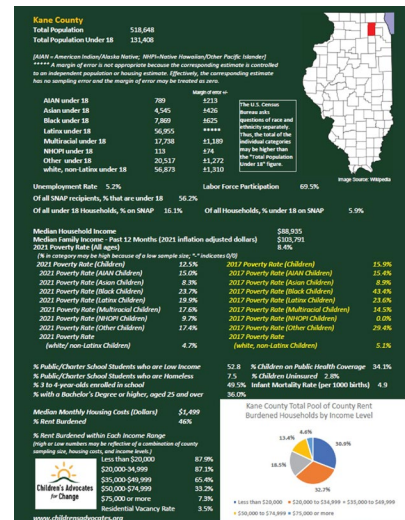
As many of you know, Congress' action to expand and enhance the federal child tax credit in 2021 lifted an estimated 2.9 million children out of poverty across the country.

Unfortunately, that change in the federal credit lasted only one year. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 12 states had some form of a state child tax credit in 2022. Last month, the Minnesota legislature passed legislation creating a child tax credit. As the information below on child poverty indicates, there are hundreds of thousands of Illinois children who need additional economic support. CAFC will continue its efforts this summer and fall prior to the fall legislative session to secure additional legislative support for the measure.

We also value our partnership with you. If you have time to join CAFC as a volunteer in its advocacy efforts for children, please let us know at info@childrensadvocates.org. If you can provide us with a donation, we urge you to do so via our website www.childrensadvocates.org/donate. We also encourage you to get the word out about CAFC by linking to our social media networks listed below. All our children across the state, in every county and community, deserve the resources they need to thrive. Join us in working to make that a reality.

This spring, Helen R. Weigle Fellow Fran Delacey and Mitch Lifson (CAFC’s Vice-President for Public Policy) took a closer look at poverty, housing, and health insurance data regarding Illinois children. As they note in a [blog post](#), nearly one in six of the state’s children are below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

Yet, groups such as the Economic Policy Institute calculate it takes approximately 250% of the FPL to meet basic household needs and maintain an adequate standard of living. By that standard, more than one million Illinois children fall below 250% of the FPL with more than two-thirds of Black children and more than 60% of Latinx children below that level. Fran and Mitch also put together child data profiles for each of the state’s 102 counties that you can find on our website at <https://childrensadvocates.org/fact-sheets>. See how the children in your county are faring.



Illinois General Assembly wrapped up its spring session at the end of May with approval of a \$50.4 billion budget, which Governor J.B. Pritzker has signed into law. Among some of the items impacting youth:

- A nearly \$75 million increase for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to hire 192 staff, provide expanded staff training, and increase scholarships for youth in care.
- An additional \$350 million to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for the K-12 evidence-based school funding formula.
- An additional \$75 million for ISBE for early childhood education.
- An additional \$170 million in General Revenue Funds for the Department of Human Services for childcare services.
- An additional \$100 million for the Student Assistance Commission for the Monetary Award Program, which provides grants to eligible Illinois residents attending approved Illinois colleges and universities.

Among some of the legislative measures the General Assembly passed:

[HB 2396](#) – Provides that beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, each elementary or unit school district in the state must establish a full-day kindergarten program. (The districts may still establish half-day kindergarten programs.) Under certain circumstances, a school board may apply for a two-year extension of the deadline.

[SB 90](#) – Requires each Illinois school district, charter school, or nonpublic, nonsectarian elementary or secondary school to create, implement, and maintain at least one written policy that prohibits discrimination and harassment based on race, color, and national origin. The bill also directs the Department of Human Rights to produce a model training program for schools aimed at the prevention of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, and national origin.

[SB 2243](#) – Requires that, in consultation with education stakeholders, the State Board of Education shall develop and adopt a comprehensive literacy plan for the State on or before January 31, 2024. The bill sets forth requirements for the comprehensive literacy plan that includes guidance on evidence-based practices for effective structures for training and deploying literacy coaches to support teachers and close opportunity gaps among student demographic groups.

[SB 1709](#) - Requires the Department of Human Services to partner with the State Board of Education to provide technical assistance for the provision of mental health care during school days with the goal of increasing the availability and accessibility of mental health resources for students.

[SB 724](#) – Establishes a state Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation Office to lead interagency efforts to ensure youth with significant and complex behavioral health needs receive appropriate community and residential services.

[HB 439](#) - Requires the Department of Children and Family Services to develop a written, strategic plan that comprehensively addresses improving timely access to quality in-state residential treatment, evidence-based alternatives to residential treatment, and specialized foster care for youth in the care of the Department who have significant emotional, behavioral, and medical needs.

Since the beginning of 2023, Children's Advocates for Change has welcomed three new board members:



Dr. Dustin Braunreiter

Dustin Braunreiter, M.D. is Associate Vice-President of Corporate Strategy at Humana. In this role, he works to drive innovation in the U.S. healthcare system that will improve access and quality of care for all people. He is also co-founder and board member of Workbox Company a Chicago-based start-up looking to help young companies successfully grow, with a particular focus on the “future of work.” Dustin is a newborn intensive care physician by training with over 20 years’ experience in health care.



John Hill, Jr.

John Hill, Jr. is a business development professional with over 25 years of business experience in growing start-ups and mature companies in the telecommunications, technology, wireless, app, film and apparel industries. Engagements range from re-engineering business plans and financial models to building marketing and sales plans. John has been a governing board member of UCAN Chicago and a governing board member of the Chicago Christian Industrial League. John graduated from the University of Illinois in 1992 with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Communications. He lives in Northwest Indiana with his wife and four sons.



Kimberly Wright

Kimberly Wright, MHA, BSN, RN is the Chief Nursing Officer at Montrose Behavioral Health Hospital for Children and Teens. While she has served in a multitude of roles in a hospital setting over the last 11 years, mental health has been her calling. Prior to entering into the healthcare sector, she was an entrepreneur for more than 30 years, owning various service-oriented business ventures. She lives in a Chicagoland south suburb and enjoys spending quality time with her children and grandchildren.

We've Moved!

Our new address is:

Children's Advocates for Change

c/o Impact House

200 W. Madison Street, Suite 300

Chicago, IL 60603



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Our mailing address is:

c/o Impact House 200 W. Madison Street, Suite 300 Chicago, IL 60606

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