

Illinois Early Learning Council

Governor's Office
of Early Childhood
Development



160 N. LaSalle
Suite N-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Vision

**Every child entering kindergarten safe,
healthy, ready to succeed & eager to learn**

April 4, 2017

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation,

The extended reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program expires on September 30th of 2017. This federal grant is an essential component of Illinois' robust early childhood home visiting system, and it is important that we fight to extend it. As Co-Chairs of the Illinois Early Learning Council (the "ELC") created by the Illinois General Assembly, we are writing to urge you and your colleagues to extend MIECHV reauthorization.

Illinois has long valued evidence-based home visiting programs as an effective and efficient strategy for strengthening expectant and new families who are vulnerable to poor health, educational, economic and social outcomes by improving self-sufficiency, reducing the risk for child abuse and neglect, and increasing children's readiness for school. Over the past three decades, Illinois has reflected this value by developing a cross-sector statewide home visiting system that provides these essential services to over 17,000 families per year, making it a nationally-recognized model for quality.

The MIECHV formula grant that Illinois received in Federal Fiscal Year 2010 has provided the State with an important opportunity to expand upon this foundation by serving additional vulnerable families and enhancing home visiting services. The latest Illinois MIECHV data show that we are serving families who need home visiting services the most and who benefit the most from them. Furthermore, the maintenance of effort requirement under MIECHV has encouraged continued, stable investment in home visiting services through the State's Department of Human Services.

Additionally, Illinois was awarded a competitive expansion grant through MIECHV. This grant has enabled our State to identify and explore innovative strategies to improve the quality of home visiting services. These innovative strategies have generated significant interest from other states and are already producing results that will be used to drive improvements in practice and continue to strengthen the evidence base of home visiting.

Recently, Illinois was awarded funding for a formula grant authorized for Federal Fiscal Year 2016 that will be used to expand direct services to new communities in Illinois and to fund innovative pilot projects targeting certain of our most vulnerable families (e.g., homeless families and pregnant and parenting teen wards). This is an exciting opportunity to continue and to expand the important work that MIECHV has enabled the State to do in the past six years, and makes it even more urgent that the MIECHV Program is extended beyond September 30th of 2017.

Home visiting is an essential component of Illinois' continuum of early education services for vulnerable families, which is overseen by the ELC. In 2003, the Illinois General Assembly enacted legislation creating the ELC to guide the development of a statewide early education system to ensure that young children at risk for school failure and their families experience the high-quality programming and services necessary for healthy development. The ELC is seen as a national model for its long history, strong participation across stakeholder groups, and creation of a Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) that provides leadership and coordination to the ELC.

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We urge you to make every effort to extend MIECHV reauthorization beyond September 30th so that we do not lose these essential services. The lives of at-risk families and children in Illinois have improved directly as a result of our MIECHV grants, and this work must continue.

On behalf of the Illinois Learning Council, we thank you for your partnership in working to ensure the future of vulnerable families in Illinois.

Sincerely,

The Early Learning Council Executive Committee