

Toddler Town Daycare

“Where your child *always* comes first”

July 31, 2015

Dear Governor Rauner, Speaker Madigan & Legislators,

I write to you today as a parent, a educator, employer and small business owner, I do not have to go into detail about the budget issues currently facing the state of Illinois, but I feel that I must paint a picture of what we in the field of Early Childhood Education are going through.

Providers, Parents, Teachers & Children are scared about what is going to happen with the current changes put into effect as of 7/1/2015. Currently the state of Illinois minimum wage is \$8.25 and in the city of Chicago's is at \$10 per hour. The current guidelines are that parents must work a minimum of 25 hours per week to receive full-time child-care. With the current rates for a family size of 2 - $(2 - \$664) = 664$ monthly / $4 = 166$ weekly / 25 hours = $\$6.64$ hourly - Below both city and state minimum wage requirements. Same applies for a family size of 3 - you meet the state minimum wage at $\$8.38$ per hour but the not the city of Chicago's. So at the lease please raise the monthly guidelines to meet minimum wage requirements in the state of Illinois. This does not even take into account the families that work 40 hours a week, in order to meet the minimum wage requirements you have to be a family of 6 to get to $\$8.49$ and hour for the state and to meet both state and city requirements you have to be a family of 8 to get to $\$10.65$ per hour.

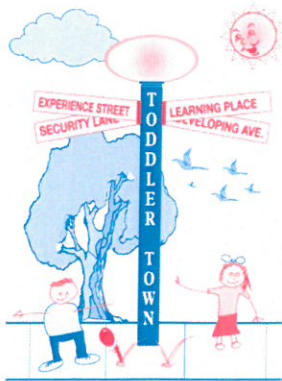
As providers, how do we tell our employees keep coming to work without receiving payroll, who are we supposed to turn to for assistance? The banks won't loan money, state lawmakers are at an impasse on creating a budget that everyone can agree with while our youngest citizens are at risk. Who do parents turn to so that they can have someplace for their children to go and be safe while they go out and provide for their families. Over the years in childcare we have been asked to improve quality and be a part of the QRS and Excellerate Illinois along with NAEYC, we have all done everything that we have to do and put everything into place to make these changes a reality and now were told that there are no funds and major program funding is in effect. Please remember that as you make these line item cuts that they are not just dollar signs, that these are actually people's lives that you are holding in your hands.

The current budget suggestions do not allow for any new children to join the program. Therefore causing childcare centers to close, teachers being let go, and parents having no one to watch their children. This is an issue now because as children turn 5 and go to Kindergarten many centers will lose 25% of their current enrollments without being able to enroll new students because of the nearly impossible guidelines put into effect.

Here is a budget savings suggestions, how about looking at the line item for postage and how much mail is sent out each and every month for childcare. How about emailing everything to providers and parents, we all have printers, internet - it's also a requirement for QRS, Excellerate, and NAEYC under technology. We can email all forms, correspondence such as approval notices, requests for additional information and so on. Maybe it's not the biggest line

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but every little bit helps. How about charging providers a monthly fee so that we can check the status of applications online and submit our monthly certificates or entering the information our selves, and going online to download a parent’s redetermination form for them, gladly many providers will be more then happy to pay this fee because of the immense time saving feature .

Please consider what will start happening if a budget is reached along with changes made to the current proposal in effect as of 7/1/2015 to the childcare assistance program.

Childcare Centers and Home providers will have to close their doors as early as of August 1, 2015

Parents will have to search for someone to try and watch their kids so they can continue to go to work

Parents will have to quit their jobs or will get fired because they are calling into work because they were unable to find someone to watch their children. Therefore causing unemployment to go up, TANF increases, Food Stamp increase, and Healthcare increases, all of these programs will see an increase if you cut childcare assistance.

Providers will be in default of their bills and mortgages because they do not have funds coming in

Parents will not be able to pay their bills or mortgages or provide for their families because they cannot go to work, because they do not have childcare

Parents and Providers will all rush to unemployment and public aid for assistance to try to feed their families and try to keep a roof over their heads

Children will be left with no quality education or quality childcare which is something that the state of Illinois is pushing for and providers are doing everything they can to become accredited through Quality Counts now ExceleRate Illinois and NAEYC.

If and when funds become available there will be no childcare available, because most centers will have lost their leases or foreclosure proceedings will have begun on their properties for non-payment

Staff that is lucky to find another job will not return to their previous centers because they have found work somewhere else or fields unrelated to childcare so centers that were able to open, now cannot because they are understaffed.

The suppliers that we work with to provide services will also suffer because we will no longer need their services. ie. Food supplier, janitorial, school supplies, music teachers, school nurses, extra curricular activities and so on.

This is just a short list of what will happen. The children, The parents, The teachers, the providers, the suppliers, we all ask that you please reconsider and issue the needed funds to keep childcare going in the state of Illinois. We BEG OF YOU to please help us!!!!!!!

Sincerely

Angelo Nikolov

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