



Hundreds of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs,  
Prosecutors, other Law Enforcement  
Leaders, and Violence Survivors  
Preventing Crime and Violence

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 15, 2010**

**Contact: Sally Puleo**

**Cell: 630-677-8673**

**E-mail: [spuleo@fightcrime.org](mailto:spuleo@fightcrime.org)**

## **Illinois Law Enforcement Leaders: Cutting Preschool Funding Today Means Bigger Prison Bill Tomorrow**

*More Than 1,200 Metro-East Children Could Lose Preschool Under Proposed State Cuts*

CHICAGO, IL (April 15, 2010) – Today Illinois law enforcement leaders called on state lawmakers to reject proposed funding cuts for early childhood programs to keep the state on track to save millions on incarceration costs.

Law enforcement leaders released a research brief indicating that high-quality early learning programs for at-risk children ages birth to five can significantly reduce crime and ultimately cut corrections costs by a quarter or more.

Under Governor Quinn's proposed budget for FY 2011, 1,254 children in the Metro East area could lose preschool.

"There is a solution to the problem of crime and violence, and locking criminals up is only part of it," said St. Clair County State's Attorney Bob Haida. "The other part is keeping children from growing up to become criminals in the first place. And the good news is that we know how to do that. Quality early childhood education makes the state safer, and is far less expensive than prison."

Currently in Illinois, there are nearly 72,000 incarcerated adults in jails and state prisons, with corrections costs exceeding \$1.4 billion every year.

A year of state lock-up costs taxpayers \$22,000 a year in Illinois—more expensive than a year's tuition, room, and board at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which costs around \$21,000. The research brief from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois estimates that Illinois would save about \$350 million in taxpayer dollars if it cut prison costs by a quarter by investing in early learning.

With the General Assembly in the midst of budget negotiations, law enforcement officials are urging state policymakers to reject a proposed \$54 million cut to the Early Childhood Block Grant in the Illinois State Board of Education budget. Combined with cuts made in 2009, preschools now face a 24 percent reduction in state-funding. As a result, nearly 23,000 children statewide could lose their spots in state-funded preschool programs and almost 600 highly-qualified early childhood teachers will lose their jobs.

“As a police chief, I can see a direct connection to the early childhood programs in our community as a major factor in influencing positive growth and behaviors in this vulnerable age group,” said Granite City Police Chief Col. Richard Miller. “At a time of economic turmoil, it is not the right choice to abandon a proven strategy which directly affects all ages of our community through reduced crime.”

The research brief was released in a news conference Thursday by Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, Channahon Police Chief Ignacio “Joe” Pena, Mundelein Police Chief Ray Rose, Sangamon County Sheriff Neil Williamson, and Ogle County State’s Attorney John “Ben” Roe.

The law enforcement leaders emphasized the cost-saving benefits of investing in high-quality early childhood education and care, especially for young, at-risk children. Researchers at the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis found that the Perry Preschool program had an annual rate of return on investment of 16 percent. The majority of the cost savings in the Perry study came from reductions in crime and incarceration.

“This is simply dollars and common sense,” said Sangamon County Sheriff Neil Williamson. “Career criminals cost us a fortune. If getting these kids in preschool can help us cut those costs by cutting crime, then we need to make sure we do everything possible to make that happen.”

A long-term study of the high-quality Perry Preschool in Michigan found that by age 40, the kids left out of the program were 85 percent more likely to be sentenced to jail or prison. Another study detailed in the report showed that kids who did not attend Chicago’s Child-Parent Centers were 24 percent more likely to be incarcerated than similar kids who did attend.

The law enforcement leaders said that more support is needed at the state and federal level to ensure that quality early childhood programs are available and affordable to more families. Costs for enrolling young children in early learning programs can run as high as \$7,300 a year, which many families are unable to afford. Even before the cuts that began last year, there remained more than 117,000 Illinois 3- and 4-year-olds in families who cannot afford to pay for quality preschool on their own.

Over the past eight years, Illinois has made great strides in expanding preschool opportunities for families. With the expansion of the Preschool for All program, Illinois has added over 43,300 slots for 3- and 4-year olds, increasing the number of children enrolled in state-funded preschool to over 95,000.

In the Metro East area, 5,225 children are enrolled in state-funded preschool.

Haida, Miller, and the law enforcement officials participating in the news conference are members of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS ILLINOIS, an anti-crime organization led by over 300 police chiefs, sheriffs, state’s attorneys, leaders of police officer organizations and crime victims.

###