



# **Rauner signs bill protecting early childhood programs**

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CHICAGO – Gov. Bruce Rauner today signed House Bill 2663, bipartisan legislation which protects preschool-aged children enrolled in early childhood programs and schools that receive state funding from being expelled.

The bill also requires the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), in consultation with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Education and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), to develop rules to prevent licensed day care and similar institutions from expelling young children for exhibiting challenging behavior.

This bill will help ensure all children in Illinois have the opportunity and tools to thrive from an early age.



Research suggests expulsion and suspension have negative educational, health and developmental outcomes for children. Recent studies show that early care institutions are expelling children at alarming rates, particularly among boys and African-American children. A study completed in 2005 indicated that in Illinois, pre-kindergarteners were expelled at three times the rate of their older peers.

“Our children are precious, and we must do everything we can to give them the tools they need to grow and succeed,” Gov. Rauner said. “It’s our duty to make sure all children, especially the most vulnerable, receive a quality education starting at a young age. I’m proud to sign this bill, which will provide teachers the tools they need to address challenging behavior so expulsion isn’t necessary.”

HB 2663 is an initiative of early childhood advocacy organizations, including the Ounce of Prevention Fund. First Lady Diana Rauner, president of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, advocated for the passage of HB 2663.

“HB 2663 and the programs it would support can serve as a model for nationwide reform of expulsion criteria in early childhood settings,” said First Lady Diana Rauner. “We must do everything we can to ensure our nation's most at-risk children have access to quality education in the early years, allowing them to have the best chance at success in life.”

Specifically, this bill requires early childhood programs refrain from expulsion and instead document steps taken to ensure children exhibiting challenging behaviors can participate safely in these programs. If attempts to address challenging behavior prove unfruitful, early childhood programs may transition a child to another program with parent permission.

Early childhood programs may temporarily remove a child for safety concerns, but the program must then attempt to address the challenging behavior through intervention and community resources, instead of resorting to expulsion. These programs also may rely on ISBE, DCFS and the Department of Human Services to recommend training, technical support and professional development resources to ensure teachers and staff have the tools to address challenging behavior with understanding.