

Illinois' Path to Prosperity

Boost Early Learning to Cut Costs and Curb Crime

Illinois spends \$2.3 billion dollars each year to house adults in prisons and jails, and experiences violent crime at rates 15 percent more than the national average. Our residents and our communities are suffering due to the financial, human, and social tolls of crime. One solution we have to combat this epidemic is investing in our youngest residents: research shows that children who participate in high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to succeed in school and less likely to commit crime later down the line.

Currently, however, those investments are falling short in Illinois. Forty-two percent of all incoming kindergarteners had not reached readiness in any of the three areas assessed in a recent study: math, language and literacy, and social-emotional development. Investments in our children and our communities must start now by laying a strong early childhood foundation. Among the demonstrated benefits of high-quality early childhood education are: higher achievement scores in middle school, higher high school graduation rates, and decreased likelihood of arrest for violent crime.

Despite what we know about these benefits, there is a lack of sufficient high-quality early childhood centers across the state, and we are not providing families access to the foundation their children and our communities need and deserve. Illinois' law enforcement leaders know that to prevent crime later, we must invest in our children today. When we invest in early childhood education, we put our children and our state on a path toward greater safety and prosperity.