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Parent advocates call on Springfield legislators to restore early education funding

As major budget cuts threaten early learning programs, local parents trek to state capitol for annual Springfield Advocacy Day on May 14.

INTERVIEWS: An advocacy training session for parents will be held on Thursday, May 8 at Christopher House: 5235 W. Belden Ave., Chicago, IL. Media are invited to the session at 7:40 p.m. to interview participants in advance of their departure to Springfield. For more information contact Adriana Díaz, 312-860-5120, adiaz@latinopolicyforum.org

Chicago —May 7, 2014 — More than 50 parents from 12 organizations will travel to Springfield with the Latino Policy Forum next week to urge Illinois legislators to restore the state’s investment in early learning as part of Early Childhood Education Advocacy Day. Massive statewide budget cuts threaten the loss of more than \$1 billion in general revenue spending for elementary and secondary education and human services.

Parents will have the opportunity to meet with state legislators to emphasize the significance of programs for infants and toddlers, and share personal stories to demonstrate how laws and policies impact the community.

Many of the programs facing cuts in next year’s budget—including the Early Childhood Block Grant, the Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon home-visiting programs, and child care assistance— have provided years of support to children from low-income families. Despite their growing share of the state’s birth-to-five population, Latinos have the least access to early learning opportunities amongst all racial and ethnic groups in Illinois.

According to Cristina Pacione-Zayas, the Forum’s education director, “Latino children, particularly those who are English language learners, are benefitting from state funded early learning programs. Increasing access to birth-to-five early learning programs is critical to closing the achievement gap and promoting student success.”

Parents traveling to Springfield with the Forum are affiliated with the following child care and early childhood education providers: Carole Robertson Center for Learning, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Christopher House, Erie Neighborhood House, Gads Hill Center, Chicago Commons, El Hogar Del Niño, Family Focus, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Northwest Side Housing Center, and Through A Child’s Eyes.

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence, and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration practices, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

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