



STATEMENT

Lawmakers Leave Nearly 10,000 Children and Their Educational Opportunities in Limbo

The Illinois legislature adjourned its spring session without extending the Invest in Kids Act Tax Credit Scholarship Program. There are now nearly 10,000 scholarship recipients and their families—along with many thousands more on waitlists—who are left in limbo about their child's educational future, left wondering how a program created with bipartisan support was not extended.

The reason the Invest in Kids Act was not extended this legislative session is simple: special interests were prioritized over kids. State leaders should be able to come together to support education options that meet the needs of all Illinois families, especially those from low-income and working-class families.

This unnecessary delay in addressing the Invest in Kids Act instills real worry and fear in families, their children, and the school communities that educate them. We challenge our lawmakers to do what is right and good for kids and to represent the interests of all their constituents, particularly the most vulnerable members of their communities who are seeking true equity in the pursuit of opportunity.

In 2017, the Invest in Kids Act was passed as a pilot program—a test period to see if it works. Make no mistake, the Tax Credit Scholarship is an overwhelming success—the pilot program works.

- Tax credit scholarships support families with demonstrated financial need – 100% of families qualify based on their income, with nearly 70% of recipient families eligible for the Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program. The average family income for all scholarships recipients is just over \$40,000.
- Tax credit scholarships serve a diverse population – 60% of scholarship recipients are racially/ethnically diverse students, higher than the percentage representation in Illinois public schools.
- Tax credit scholarship support and family demand remains extremely high – For every one child who is fortunate to be awarded a scholarship, five more children are on a waitlist hoping to receive a scholarship, too. Additionally, 97% of participating families are satisfied with the program.
- Tax credit scholarships are popular with voters – An ARW Strategies poll showed 61% of Illinois voters approve of the program, including 67% of Democrats, 71% of African Americans, and 81% of Hispanics.

There is a path forward. According to recent statements by Governor Pritzker, there is time to extend this critical program during the General Assembly's fall veto session and that he will sign it if it comes to his desk. Even more, the hopes and dreams of deserving children are buoyed by both the strong champions of the program in the legislature as well as the many other legislators who want to support it, if only special interest groups allow them to vote their conscience.

We stand ready, with thousands of children and families from across the state, to ensure that every lawmaker knows the undeniable success of this program.

Our work for educational equity continues because, quite simply, children are worth fighting for!

