

Public comments from Livingston County State's Attorney Randy Yedinak

Pontiac, Illinois

For the Early Childhood Funding Commission

September 15, 2020

- Good afternoon Commission members. I'm Randy Yedinak, State's Attorney of Livingston County.
- I'm also a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois, as are 350 other police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors all across the state. Together, we law enforcement leaders advocate for research-based investments in children and families that will reduce crime and violence — efforts such as home-visiting programs for expectant and new parents, child care for working families, and quality preschool. These efforts make our communities safer by helping better prepare kids for school and life.
- As a prosecutor, I don't want to see our residents get involved in, or become victims of, crime and violence.
- It is gratifying to see my own personal experience backed up by data. Research tells us that kids participating in high-quality preschool, for instance, have better school performance and are less likely to drop-out or end up in the criminal justice system.
- We also know that these programs are most effective for those who need them most: kids who have started out in life with disadvantages, such as poverty, trauma, and exposure to other adverse childhood experiences.
- Even though we get the biggest bang for the buck by investing in our youngest children, we spend *multiple times more* on children ages 6 to 18 than we do on younger kids.
- We pay for this underinvestment through expensive, remedial school programs and in the costs of our jails, prisons, and the criminal justice system itself.
- The work you are doing here has our full support. We look forward to the Commission's recommendations on more appropriate funding levels, funding sources, and a new vision for governance that will improve upon our current system of systems.
- We appreciate that this work will not be easy and could take a number of years. But we look forward to partnering with you and other state leaders to enact and implement this vision, over time. Doing so will lead to safer communities and a more secure and prosperous Illinois.