

Illinois Early Learning Council Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Resources and Programs

February 26, 2026

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. State Budget Update
3. IDEC Legislative Update
 - *Julie Gilling, Director of Policy, IDEC*
4. Federal Government Updates
 - Child Care Funding Freeze
 - *Lesley Schwartz, Director, IDHS Division of Early Childhood*
 - Federal Fiscal Year 2026 Budget
5. Public Comment
6. Next Steps

Please put your
name and
organization in the
chat

The Governor's Proposed FY27 budget includes nearly \$4.5B in Early Childhood investments

Investing in What Matters: Early Childhood Development



SMART START ILLINOIS: Investing in Early Childhood

Governor's Proposed FY27 Budget for Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC): \$4.424 billion All Funds, \$2.088 billion General Funds

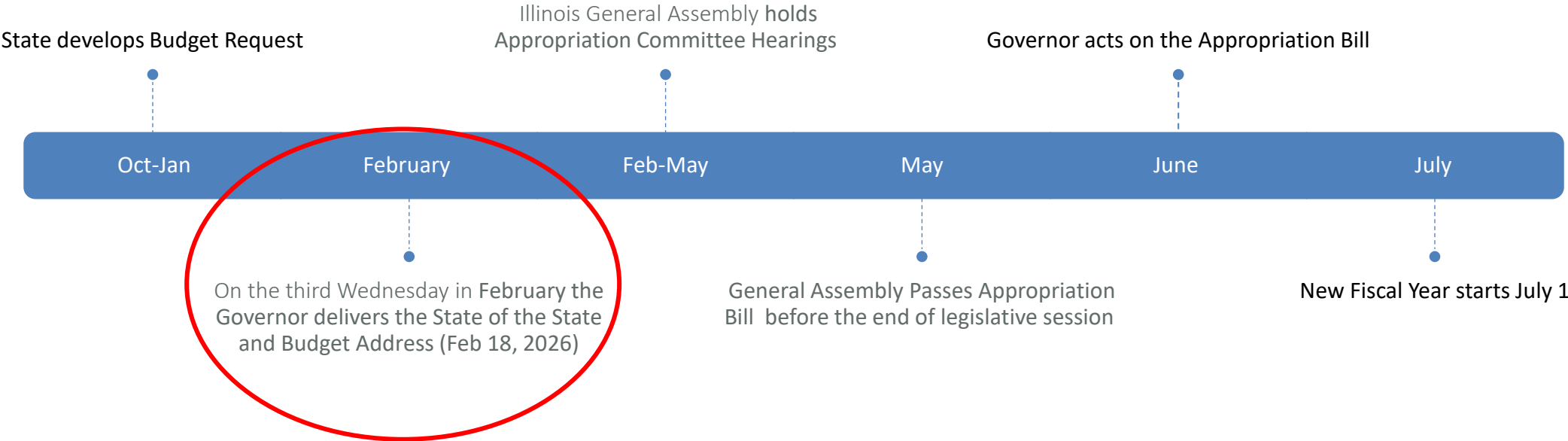
- Includes the first year of full operational and programmatic funding for IDEC.
- **\$748 million** to maintain investment in the Early Childhood Block Grant funding.
 - Maintains the funding level that has supported the addition of over 11,000 new seats added since 2023.
- **\$200 million** investment for Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Grants.
- Other Early Childhood Investments include:
 - **\$55 million** in additional investment for increased participation in the Child Care Assistance Program, up to 155,000 children.
 - **\$2.3 million** to continue implementation and expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
 - Today, more than 97,000 children under the age of five are receiving free books in the mail every month, a 59 percent increase since February 2025.
 - **\$15 million** increase for Early Intervention programs to support timely services for families.
- IDEC funding consolidates nearly \$2 billion in FY26 General Funds appropriations for early childhood programs such as the Child Care Assistance, Early Intervention, Home Visiting, and Maternal and Child Health programs, as well as DCFS day care licensing and the ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant.



**Dolly Parton's
Imagination Library**
Coverage Across Illinois



Updates on the Budget Process



IDEC Legislative Bills Updates

SB2984 (Sen Collins) /HB5204 (Rep Mason)

- Makes IDEC the Co-Chair and the agency responsible to staff the Early Learning Council and explicitly adds parents/caregivers of children 5 and under to the Council. Additionally, amends the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Act. Provides that IDEC shall appoint specified members to the advisory committee.

SB3641 (Sen Morrison)/HB5099 (Rep Mason)

- Clarifies in statute, that IDEC is the lead agency responsible to administer child care background checks.

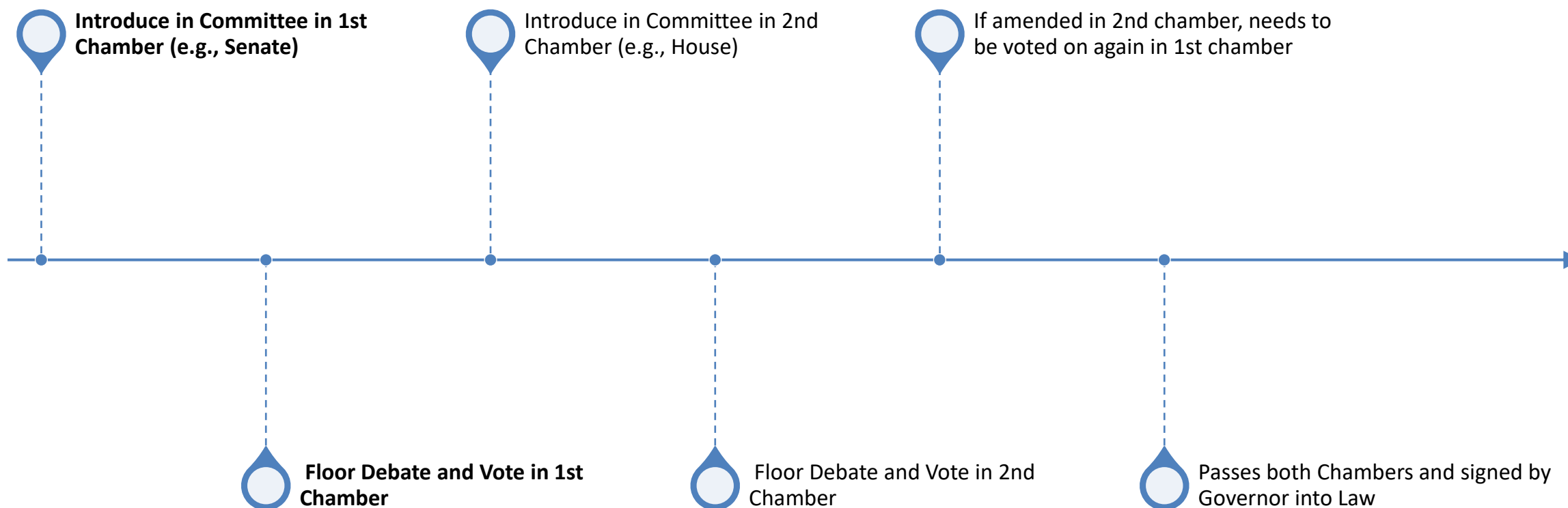
SB3907 (Sen Morrison)/HB5373 (Rep Mason)

- Makes changes in three major areas: child care background checks, exemptions and general clean-up.

**Preparing to call the bills for a vote in Committee*

Legislative Process Overview

A bill becomes a law when it passes both houses of the General Assembly with a majority vote in each house and is signed by the governor. This process can take time with committee debates, hearings, and amendments.



Federal Child Care Funding Freeze

- On 1/6, the Trump Administration announced their decision to freeze \$10 billion in federal funds for five Democratic-led states, temporarily halting IL's ability to draw down more than \$1 billion in social service funding for Illinois, including funds that support IL's CCAP program.
- On 1/9, the U.S. District Court for Southern District of New York issued a [temporary restraining order](#).
- On 1/23, the temporary restraining order was extended by 14 days.
- On 2/6, a [preliminary injunction](#) was granted to stop the freeze of CCAP funds
- As of today, providers and families should continue to operate as usual.



January 8, 2026

Dear Valued Partner,

On Tuesday, January 6, the Trump Administration announced their decision to freeze \$10 billion in federal funds for five Democratic-led states. Late Tuesday evening, the administration notified Illinois that this includes temporarily halting the State's ability to draw down more than \$1 billion in social service funding for Illinois. This includes over \$900 million in combined annual support from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG), which provide most of the funding for Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

The news of this funding freeze is creating needless and harmful confusion. The State has been monitoring the situation carefully and exploring all available options to protect our state's employers, workforce, and the families who count on all of us to keep CCAP strong.

Despite this cruel attack on children and families, **as of January 7, 2026, we do not anticipate that funding will be impacted immediately.** We recognize that the Trump Administration's freeze has already imposed tremendous uncertainty on organizations, and it will have immediate effects on efforts to plan for the future, including planning future staffing and program operations.

We urge you to use your voices to advocate against the Trump Administration's actions, which not only destabilizes Illinois' child care ecosystem, but has a devastating impact on jobs and the economy.

We realize there are many unanswered questions about this alarming federal action against the people of our state and we will provide more updates as soon as they are available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lesley Schwartz".

Lesley Schwartz
Director, IDHS Division of Early Childhood

Topic Area	Program	FY25 Funding Levels	FY26 Funding Levels	Change in Funding from FY25 to FY26
Early Childhood Education (Funded by HHS)	Child Care & Development Block Grant (CCDBG)	\$8.7 billion	\$8.8 billion	+\$85 million
	Head Start	\$12.3 billion	\$12.4 billion	+\$85 million
	Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)	\$315 million	\$315 million	+\$0
Other USED Programs	IDEA Part B	\$420 million	\$420 million	+\$0
	IDEA Part C	\$540 million	\$540 million	+\$0
	Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)	\$75 million	\$75 million	+\$0

Federal Govt. Budget

February 3, 2026: The House of Representatives voted, 217–214, to approve spending bills, including funding for child care and early learning as part of Labor–Health and Human Services. This ends the partial government shutdown, and the package was signed by President Trump later that day.

Public Comment

Next Steps

- Our next meeting will be held March. 26th from 11-12pm
- In the meantime, if there are any topics that you want to learn more about or hear, please fill out this [survey](#)