

Bill would avert break in Illinois child care funding

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SPRINGFIELD — Proposed legislation could avert a threatened two-month break in state funding for 40,000 Illinois child care providers.

A House bill introduced Friday would transfer \$73.6 million within the state budget to prevent a halt in subsidy payments, the [\(Springfield\) State Journal-Register](#) reported today.

Warnings of a cutoff in funding sparked complaints from providers and low-income parents who depend on affordable child care to be able to go to work. The issue affects more than 85,000 low-income parents who get state-underwritten day care help.

Earlier this week, the Illinois Department of Human Services had sent letters to child care providers informing them that the agency has run out of funding for the \$896 million-a-year program. The agency said that might not change until the new fiscal year that begins July 1.

Januari Smith, a spokeswoman for the department, said on Thursday that the cash crunch has been building, largely because of recession-related growth in the welfare rolls.

"We don't have the money," she said. "We're very well aware of the burden this will put on working families."

The House bill is sponsored by Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, a Chicago Democrat. She said the \$73.6 million would come from unspent general revenue funds in the current budget.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Pat Quinn said he would sign the measure if it passes.

"This solution allows the state to continue operating within our means while safeguarding a program that lets thousands of Illinois parents work," Brooke Anderson said Friday.