

Day Care Providers Stress Urgency Over Funding Gap

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A bill -- [HB 6141](#) -- introduced Friday, would transfer \$73.6 million within the state budget to prevent a halt in subsidy payments. Gov. Pat Quinn has indicated he'll sign it if it passes, but the providers are stressing urgency. Natalie Martinez reports.

More than a dozen Chicago-area day care providers on Monday expressed concern over a delay in the passage of a bill that will avert a threatened two-month break in state funding for 40,000 Illinois child care providers. And they say that if the legislation doesn't go through, they'll remember it when they go to the polls.

A bill -- [HB 6141](#) -- introduced Friday, would transfer \$73.6 million within the state budget to prevent a halt in subsidy payments. Gov. Pat Quinn has indicated he'll sign it if it passes, but the providers are stressing urgency.

"Parents, if they don't have child care, they can't work. They can't go to school. They can't work. They can't pay their rent. They can't buy food. Basically, they're going to be on the limb for homelessness," said day care provider Zuli Turner.

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.

The Illinois Department of Human Services sent letters last week to child care providers informing them that the agency ran 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. The \$73.6 million would come from unspent general revenue funds in the current budget, [she explained to the *State Journal Register*](#).

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