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Illinois House OKs money for child-care program

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Lawmakers scrounged up some money on Wednesday so low-income parents in Illinois can keep subsidized child care, but Republicans said the legislation became necessary because Gov. Pat Quinn has mismanaged the state budget.

House Minority Leader Tom Cross, R-Oswego, said the legislature fully funded child-care programs last year, but Quinn redirected the money.

“We are now having to correct a problem he created because he didn’t stay within his budget,” Cross said.

Cross said the budget for fiscal year 2013, which starts July 1, will be one of the toughest budgets the General Assembly will pass.

“It is imperative that we all recognize that,” Cross said. “But perhaps more important is that the governor recognizes that he has to live within the means of that budget that we’re going to pass for 2013.”

Other Republican lawmakers, like Rep. Mike Bost, R-Murphysboro, said the governor’s move was a ploy to get more money out of the legislature.

Quinn's budget spokeswoman, Kelly Kraft, said the governor had no choice when **he diverted funds** from the Child Care Assistance Program to the state’s welfare program, known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The funding shift left childcare providers scrambling to money to pay their bills.

“TANF, along with Child Care, is funded through the same line, and federal law mandates the state pay TANF first,” Kraft said. “Due to that unexpected increase in TANF, the state developed a \$73.6 million shortage in funding available for child care.”

“The legislation passed by the House calls for that funding to be restored ensuring that the tens of thousands of Illinois residents who benefit from childcare are not forced to choose between going to work and caring for their children,” Kraft said.

The legislation, **Senate Bill 2450**, allows unspent general revenue funds to be used to fund the program. It was approved in the House by a vote of 113-3.

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