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## Child care cuts may be averted

### Lawmakers asked to OK budget transfer to fund service for low-income families

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Gov. **Pat Quinn** said Tuesday that he's found a way to plug a \$73 million budget gap that would have cut off funding for child care services for low-income families across Illinois.

The announcement came one week after Quinn's office told more than 40,000 child care providers that the state had run out of money and couldn't pay for their services for the final three months of the budget year, which ends June 30. That left day care providers wondering how they would stay open and panicked parents who said they wouldn't be able to work or go to school without the subsidized care.

Now Quinn says the state will shift money that wasn't being used elsewhere in the budget to pay for child care. Lawmakers would have to sign off on the proposal, but Quinn said he's "optimistic" they would go along with the plan.

"We've located about \$73 million in the budget that will not be spent on the original purpose this year, so we're going to reallocate that money for the child care subsidy to make sure that working moms and dads have the subsidy they need in order to go to work and make sure their kids are well taken care of," Quinn said Tuesday.

Officials with Quinn's budget office said the money will come from a fund originally set aside to pay Medicare premiums.

The proposal is under review by Democratic leaders. A spokeswoman for Senate President **John Cullerton** of Chicago said he is also open to alternatives, but warned that "the solution will demand a consensus."

A spokeswoman for House Republican Leader **Tom Cross** said he wants to work to solve the child care funding shortfall and is examining the proposal.

Still, word of a plan was welcome relief for Janice Bolling, who operates a day care center out of her home in Englewood. Bolling helps care for nine children ages 2 to 5, and she worried that the funding cutoff could have forced her into foreclosure. Bolling said she was determined to stay open, and already had asked parents to bring food from home so their children could eat while Bolling didn't get paid.

"I'm really glad that the governor is getting together with legislators to do the right thing," Bolling said. "We were really just amazed around here about what was happening."

The focus now shifts to preventing cuts to the child care program in next year's budget, which lawmakers are crafting and hope to finalize by May 31. Quinn has proposed slashing the program by \$85 million, along with increasing parent co-pays and limiting eligibility.

"At the end of the day, we're just trying to do the right thing as best we can," said Rep. **Sara Feigenholtz**, a Chicago Democrat who is sponsoring the bill to address the current year's funding gap. "We're in some very difficult budget times, and trying to keep the ship floating is not easy."