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**Latino parents to travel to Springfield, tell legislators:  
“Invest in our communities, invest in our kids, invest in our state”**

In the wake of devastating funding cuts to Latino-serving early care programs, the Latino Policy Forum organizes second annual Advocacy Day to state capitol

**NOTE: An advocacy training session for parents and community leaders will be held on Tuesday, March 15 at El Valor Carlos Cantu Children and Family Center (2434 S. Kildare, Chicago). Media are invited to the session between 11:30am and 1pm to interview Advocacy Day participants in advance of their departure to Springfield. Capitol-bound buses will leave Chicago from El Valor’s parking lot at 6:45am on Wednesday, March 16. For more information, contact Sara McElmurry: 312-351-3890 or [smcelmurry@latinopolicyforum.org](mailto:smcelmurry@latinopolicyforum.org).**

**CHICAGO –March 11, 2011** – At least 40 parents and community leaders, representing multiple Latino-serving organizations, will meet with state legislators to discuss concerns over devastating cuts proposed in Gov. Quinn’s fiscal year 2012 (FY12) budget. Released last month, the budget would preserve funding for early childhood education while slashing resources for other vital programs, offering bittersweet news for thousands of Latino families. The group will travel from Chicago to Springfield on Wednesday, March 16 as part of an Advocacy Day organized by the Latino Policy Forum.

“Governor Quinn has long been a champion of early childhood education, and we applaud his commitment to investing in Illinois’ youngest learners, our state’s future,” said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. “But while his 2012 budget protects education funding, it proposes cuts to other areas, cuts that would be devastating not only for Latino families, but for families across our state.”

Programs funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), including important child care services, stand to be cut by at least one hundred million dollars. And given that nearly 70 percent of state funding directed to Latino-serving organizations flows through IDHS, Latinos—the second-largest ethnic group in the state, having grown nearly 32 percent since 2000—stand to take a disproportionate hit if the budget is approved.

But while the outlook is devastating for IDHS-funded programs, it is promising for early childhood education: Gov. Quinn is proposing a partial restoration of funds cut from the Early Childhood Education Block Grant in FY10 and FY11, which would allow Preschool for All and other programs to continue to serve thousands of at-risk children. Funding for other early care programs, such as voluntary home visitation for new parents and speech/physical therapy services for children with developmental delays, was also maintained or restored.

The Latino Policy Forum mobilized dozens of concerned parents, preschool teachers and administrators, and community leaders to voice their concerns in Springfield last spring, when the FY11 budget proposed deep cuts to early childhood education programs, to the tune of a cumulative \$92 million since FY09. While early childhood education seems to have been spared this year, Advocacy Day participants hope that their presence in Springfield will inform legislators of the effects that proposed IDHS cuts will have on their communities.

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## **Latino parents travel to Springfield//2**

“Our children are our future, but they can only succeed if they’re being raised by families in communities that have access to the resources they need,” said Maria Esther Lopez, director of institutional advancement at El Valor and co-chair of the Latino Policy Forum’s early childhood education work group. “Child care and other IDHS-funded programs are vital to our communities. Our kids’ academic outcomes are directly related to the support they receive at home.”

Recently-released 2010 Census data shows that Illinois’ Latino population has increased by nearly 500,000 since 2000, the largest growth of any group in the state. Given that one-in-four Illinois children under age five is Latino, and that a stubborn achievement gap exists between Latinos and their peers before kindergarten, funding early childhood education represents a sound investment in Illinois’ future. Strong state investment in both education and human services is critical in ensuring that Latinos are able to reach their potential, shaping a bright shared future for all Illinois families.

Organizations participating in the second annual Latino Policy Forum Lobby Day include El Valor, Onward Neighborhood House, Erie Neighborhood House, Carole Robertson Center for Learning, Gads Hill Center, Catholic Charities of The Archdiocese of Chicago and Through A Child's Eyes.

### **About the Latino Policy Forum**

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit [www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org).

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