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Governor's Budget Includes Historic Advances for Child Care and Health Care *Illinois' Low-Income Children and Working Families a Priority in 2008 Budget*

CHICAGO – Illinois Action for Children and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law today lauded Governor Rod Blagojevich's proposed budget. The proposal supports a continued increase for Preschool for All to expand access, a quality investment in the IDHS Child Care Assistance program and also announced a plan to make affordable health insurance available to everyone in Illinois.

"Health care and child care are the two most significant financial obstacles facing Illinois' low-income working families," said Maria Whelan, President/CEO of Illinois Action for Children. "Today's historic announcement is an important step toward breaking the cyclical and debilitating effects of poverty and improves the health and well-being of Illinois' children."

"The governor's leadership on health care and early childhood education sends a powerful message to the country," said John Bouman, president of the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. "We can make smart investments that strengthen the economic health of the state while opening the way to economic security for children and adults."

Included in the Governor's historic plan is a continued investment in early childhood education, including a second-year commitment to Preschool for All, an 8.2% average rate increase for child care providers who care for low income children through the IDHS Child Care Assistance program and an investment in infrastructure and facilities to support early childhood expansion.

Governor Blagojevich's proposed "Illinois Covered" program would make affordable health coverage available to all Illinois residents. This innovative plan will benefit small business owners, middle class families struggling to pay for insurance, and the estimated 1.4 million adults in Illinois currently living without health insurance.

Illinois is one of the nation's top states when it comes to care and education services to children birth through age five. Now, with "Illinois Covered", we will further support families with young children as they move down the road towards economic independence.

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Illinois Action for Children's mission is to create a common voice and vision for advancing high quality and accessible programs that foster the development, health and well-being of all Illinois children. www.actforchildren.org

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law is a national resource that champions law and policy promoting equal opportunity and support for low-income individuals, families, and communities so that they can escape poverty permanently. www.poverylaw.org