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House Approves, 105-6, \$24 Million Grant to Foster Parents to Off-Set Surging Food, Gas Prices *Foster Parents Spend \$281 Out-of-Pocket Each Month*

Springfield, IL—The Illinois House overwhelmingly approved legislation yesterday, House Bill 5095, to provide a one-time payment this year of \$24 million to the state’s 7,500 foster parents to help offset surging food prices and energy costs.

The House endorsed the measure 105-6.

“It’s an embarrassment that DCFS seeks volunteer foster parents to care for abused and neglected children and then refuses to pay the full cost of care as food and energy prices rise,” said State Rep. Lou Lang (D-Skokie), the chief-sponsor of the plan.

The payments would average \$145 per foster parent.

Foster parents, who have had only one state reimbursement increase in seven years, on average, spend \$703 per month—of that \$281 comes out of the foster parent’s pocket, according to Margaret Berglind, the CEO of the Child Care Association of Illinois.

“The Governor’s budget—which is flat out fiction—blatantly ignores that Illinois foster families are facing the fastest-rising food prices in 17 years,” said Berglind. “Rep. Lang’s bill recognizes the reality of foster parent expenses.

“The foster family budget reality is a dozen eggs are 38% more expensive than last year, a gallon of milk 30% more expensive, a pound-loaf of wheat bread, 24%,” said Berglind. “All these price increases are coming out of the pockets of foster parents.”

Berglind also cited a national report on foster parent under-funding released last year by two national organizations and the University of Maryland. The report said Illinois average rates (for children 2, 9, and 16) were \$380, \$422, and \$458 per month and they needed to be raised to \$661, \$757, and \$830 to meet actual costs.

In addition's to Lang legislation, State Senator Dan Cronin (R-Elmhurst) and House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie have introduced similar legislation, Senate Bill 2361 and House Bill 4590, that aims to establish a methodology for regularly calculating and recalculating foster caregiver reimbursement rates.

“We applaud Rep. Lang, Sen. Cronin, and Leader Currie’s leadership and willingness to address the state’s under-funding of foster children care,” said Berglind.

The legislation now moves to the Senate for consideration.