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Diocese of Belleville
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Diocese of Joliet
Diocese of Peoria
Diocese of Rockford
Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, the diocesan bishops of Illinois, write to you on an important matter of public policy and social justice. As many of you know, four years ago Democrats and Republicans worked together to pass the Invest in Kids Act on a bipartisan vote. This law allows for a 75 percent state income tax credit for any charitable donation to an approved scholarship granting organization (SGO). These SGOs use those donations to grant tuition scholarships to the children of working class families, whose income is no greater than three times the poverty level, so that they may attend the school of their choice.

Over the past three years, the Invest in Kids program has proven to be a resounding success. Working with our partner SGOs – Empower Illinois and Big Shoulders – over 20,000 children in Illinois, from diverse racial and religious backgrounds, have been able to access some 650 different schools of their families' choice. Participating schools have provided excellent education to these students, even during the pandemic, through in-school, high quality instruction. And the need is still not being met. Already in 2021, there are over 25,000 more students waiting in line for scholarships, a testament to the need to expand this program.

Unfortunately, Governor Pritzker has recommended severely cutting the Invest in Kids program. If his budget recommendation is enacted, the program will struggle to remain viable.

We are writing to urge you to support an alternative plan which includes (1) scholarships to trade schools, (2) an increase in the Invest in Kids tax credit and (3) annual renewals for scholarship students. We ask you to oppose the Governor's plan and join us. Support this plan which will not only benefit families in our Catholic schools, but more importantly, will provide otherwise unattainable educational opportunities for all working class families. All children deserve these opportunities no matter their family income. The popularity of the Invest in Kids program proves great support for this principle.

Please call your state legislators. You can find contact information for your state representative and state senator by visiting www.ilcatholic.org – scroll to the bottom of the page, click on "Find Your Legislator" and input your zip code and address. Because this is an issue that will be negotiated during the budget negotiating process there is no specific bill number to give you. We ask you to simply call your state legislators and urge them to oppose the Governor's plan to cut the Invest in Kids program and instead support efforts to extend and improve the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit.

One of the most important decisions parents make is where their children will attend school. All of us concerned with the common good should advocate for greater access to excellent educational opportunities. This is at the heart of the Invest in Kids Act. Please join us in promoting this important issue with Illinois' political leadership.

Sincerely,

+ Blase J. Cupich

His Eminence Cardinal Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

+ Daniel R. Jenky

Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky C.S.C.
Bishop of Peoria

+ Thomas John Paprocki

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

+ David J. Malloy

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford

+ Ronald A. Hicks

Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks
Bishop of Joliet

+ Michael G. McGovern

Most Reverend Michael G. McGovern
Bishop of Belleville