

## Legislative Report 4/21/2023

Springfield, IL- Both the House and Senate returned from Spring Break, reconvening on April 18-20 and on April 25-28. They are also both set to adjourn the spring session on May 19th, which is much earlier than the May 31st adjournment date in the past.

### From IRTA: Legislative Update 4/11/2023

#### IBHE Awards over \$3 Million in Early Childhood Worker Grants

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has awarded \$3.37 to two public and two private Illinois universities to support individuals aspiring to work in early childhood care and education.

The grants will support scholarships and other supports for 78 students pursuing master's degrees at Illinois State University (\$800,753), Lewis University (\$358,390), National Louis University (\$1,191,511), and the University of Chicago Illinois (\$1,027,989).

The students in these programs are expected to graduate in summer 2024.

“The grants will help increase the diversity of faculty in early childhood education in Illinois at a time of great need by expanding the educational pipelines for aspiring early childhood faculty,” IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro said in a statement. “We are excited to partner with the four selected universities to continue to make progress toward a high-quality early childhood education system in our state.”

Early Childhood Faculty Preparation Grants are a part of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) initiative. ECACE is a collaboration between IBHE and the Illinois Community College Board, in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, and Illinois Department of Human Services.

#### -Illinois seeks library pledge against ‘banning’ books

Illinois' new secretary of state and Democrats in the General Assembly are pushing back against a rise in challenges to books shelved in libraries.

Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias, who is also the state librarian, is spearheading legislation that would make state grants to libraries contingent on their establishing “a written policy prohibiting the practice of banning books.”

At stake is about \$61 million annually to 1,600 public and school libraries. The legislation, HB2789, sponsored by Naperville Democratic Rep. Anne Stava-Murray, won House approval 69-39 last month and awaits action by the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Illinois would be the nation’s first state to adopt such a policy, according to Giannoulias. But it’s far from the only state dealing with contention among the stacks. The American Library Association compiled

1,200 challenges to books nationally in 2022, nearly double the record number a year earlier. And librarians are receiving violent threats.

#### Additional notes:

#### CDC Reports 14 Counties at Elevated COVID-19 Level

The CDC is reporting 14 Illinois counties are at an elevated community level for COVID-19, up from 13 a week prior, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced Friday. IDPH reported 7,195 new cases of COVID-19 in the week ending April 2, as well as 14 additional deaths.

“It continues to be welcome news that COVID-19 community levels are remaining low throughout most of Illinois,” IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra said in a statement. “However, as

spring arrives so does the potential for common springtime illnesses. As many families across Illinois come together to celebrate their faith traditions this weekend, as well as travel during spring break, let's continue to practice good public health techniques to protect our family and friends who are most at risk of serious illness."

IDPH notes that, in addition to updated COVID-19 data, there has been an uptick in the number of positive tests for the common cold and stomach viruses. They urge Illinoisans who have flu-like symptoms to take preventative measures not to spread their potential illness to friends and relatives, especially those with health risk factors.

As of April 6, there were 703 individuals hospitalized with COVID-19 in the state, including 79 in the ICU and 21 on ventilators.

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