

65 E. Wacker Place Suite 1620 Chicago, IL 60601 Ph. 312-368-1066 Fx. 312-368-1090

108 E. Cook St. Springfield, IL 62704 Ph. 217-528-9200 Fx. 217-528-7214

www.ilcatholic.org Diocese of Belleville Archdiocese of Chicago Diocese of Joliet Diocese of Peoria Diocese of Rockford Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, the Catholic bishops of Illinois, write with a sense of urgency. Unless the General Assembly acts to renew the Invest in Kids scholarship program, more than 9,000 children currently relying on this program to attend a non-public school may have their educational path disrupted. Without an extension of the program in Illinois law now, no scholarships will be awarded for the school year that will begin in September 2024. Most of these children will have to leave the school their families determined was their best chance to receive a high-quality education in a safe and wholesome learning environment. This is an injustice that should and can be avoided, but only if the General Assembly acts when it reconvenes on October 24, 2023.

Invest in Kids has proven to be a beacon of hope for thousands of Illinois students and their families. Children receiving Invest in Kids scholarships come from lower-income families who could not otherwise afford tuition at the Catholic or another non-public school that is the best fit for their child. Childhood is a limited time in the life of a human being and primary and secondary education is not something that can be put off to some future date when it is convenient for adults. This is our one chance to offer these Illinois children a good start. Please help keep education options available and a brighter future possible by contacting your state senator and state representative and telling them to continue the Invest in Kids Program.

Since its inception six years ago, Invest in Kids has generated overwhelmingly positive results. Nearly 40,000 scholarships have been awarded to students attending non-public schools across Illinois. Demand for scholarships is very high - for every scholarship granted, three students are turned down due to lack of funds. Contrary to what you may have heard, this is not a voucher program, nor does it take state funds away from the public schools. These scholarships are funded through contributions from donors who receive a tax credit for their donation on their Illinois state income tax.

What can you do to help? Please contact your state senator and state representative to let them know of your support for extending the Invest in Kids tax credit scholarship program in Illinois. We also encourage you to urge your fellow parishioners to do the same. Our collective voice is vital to the continued help for Illinois families. Please visit the Catholic Conference of Illinois website at www.ilcatholic.org or call the Springfield office at (217) 528-9200 for further information on how to locate your elected officials, request sample wording for a message to your legislator, or for information about how to donate to this program.

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His Eminence Cardinal Blase J. Cupich Archbishop of Chicago

+ Thomas John Paprocki

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

Most Reverend Michael McGovern Bishop of Belleville

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Bishop of Joliet

Most Reverend Ronald Hicks

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Most Reverend Louis Tylka

Bishop of Peoria

+ David J. Mally Most Reverend David J. Mallov Bishop of Rockford