



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
PAT QUINN

**For Immediate Release**

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

**Contact**

Press Line: (312) 814-3158

Katie Hickey [Katie.Hickey@illinois.gov](mailto:Katie.Hickey@illinois.gov)

Dave Blanchette [Dave.Blanchette@illinois.gov](mailto:Dave.Blanchette@illinois.gov)

# Governor Quinn Announces Investment for Early Childhood Center in Brighton Park Neighborhood

## *Launches Quality Rating System for Early Learning Providers Across Illinois*

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today announced an investment to help Gads Hill Center develop an early childhood education center in the Brighton Park neighborhood of Chicago. The investment is part of Governor Quinn’s *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital construction program and will help increase the availability of early childhood services in the most underserved area of Illinois. Today’s announcement is part of Governor Quinn’s Birth to Five Initiative unveiled during his 2014 State of the State address that is focused on three keys to a healthy child: prenatal care, access to early care and learning opportunities and strong parent support.

“There’s nothing more important than a child’s education - and that begins at birth,” Governor Quinn said. “Study after study has shown that high-quality early childhood education provides the highest return of any public investment we can make – more than \$7 for every dollar invested. In Illinois we believe in properly funding education in order to provide all students with the quality learning opportunities they deserve. By investing in our youngest residents now, we can ensure they are prepared for great success both inside and out of the classroom throughout their lives.”

The \$2.5 million investment will help Gads Hill Center acquire a building in Brighton Park to develop the Early Childhood Center. The new center will serve children between the ages of birth to five and offer education and family support services, primarily for low income families. The Brighton Park area has been identified as the area in Illinois with the most pressing need for early childhood education services.

“Gads Hill Center is excited about the investment that Governor Quinn is making in the future of preschool age children in Brighton Park through the Birth to Five Initiative,” Maricela Garcia, CEO of Gads Hill Center said. “More children ages 0-5 will have access to quality programs to develop the academic and social emotional skills they need to enter school ready

to learn and to succeed. Today, the families in this neighborhood celebrate that their dream to have a center in their community will become a reality soon.”

Governor Quinn also today announced the launch of his ExceleRate Illinois quality rating and improvement system for early learning and development providers in Illinois. ExceleRate Illinois recognizes those providers that make quality a top priority and lets parents view online the quality rating for each early education provider.

ExceleRate’s rating system ranges from Licensed to Bronze, Silver and Gold, with Gold being the highest level. The existing Gads Hill Center in Lawndale has achieved a Gold rating. New research has shown that when quality is a focus in educating children during the first five years of their lives, children are better prepared for school and life. For more information visit [www.excelerateillinois.com](http://www.excelerateillinois.com).

Governor Quinn and the state of Illinois have submitted an application for \$80 million in federal Preschool Development Grants over the next four years to expand full-day pre-school for four-year-olds. This grant would support the Governor’s Birth to Five Initiative. If the state’s grant application is successful, school districts and local community based agencies will work together to create a “pipeline” of high quality, continuous services that may include home visiting services, high quality child care, Early Head Start and Head Start, full day kindergarten and supportive parent engagement services in the early elementary years. These continuous, high-quality early learning services will maximize children’s opportunity for success in school and later life.

In his 2014 State of the State address, Governor Quinn called for a bold plan to invest \$1.5 billion in new funding for prenatal care, high-quality early childhood care and education, and parent education and support services. As part of this Birth to Five Initiative, Illinois will invest more than \$120 million in state resources over four years to further expand these intensive Preschool for All “slots,” while also increasing investment in services for pregnant women, infants, toddlers three year olds.

###