Share Your ECACE Story – Your Voice Makes a Difference.

To ensure ECACE continues to support Illinois' early childhood workforce, advocates are asking for **a $15 million increase in ECACE funding for FY26**—but we need YOUR help.

Tell Us How ECACE Has Impacted You!

Your personal story can inspire action. Whether you are a scholarship recipient, an educator, a parent, or a supporter of early childhood education, we want to hear from you. By sharing your experience, you can help **demonstrate the real impact of ECACE** and encourage lawmakers to restore funding.

Why Does ECACE Funding Matter?

- Supports working professionals in earning additional credentials and degrees.
- Strengthens the early childhood workforce and helps address educator shortages.
- Ensures access to high-quality early learning for young children.
- Builds a stronger economy by investing in early childhood education.

Learn more here.

How to Share Your Story:

Step 1: Fill out the submission form.
Step 2: Upload a photo or video if you'd like.
Step 3: Submit and help amplify the call for full ECACE funding!

Your story can make a real difference in securing ECACE funding for the future. **Submit your story now and help us build a stronger, more equitable early childhood education system in Illinois!**

Questions? Contact us at neoma.nagahawatte@actforchildren.org

Read stories from ECACE scholarship recipients below!

Anonymous Educator/Teaching Assistant/Parent Educator

I am very thankful for the ECACE Program since they gave me the opportunity to explore new skills in the area of early childhood and allowed me to help families and children. The opportunity to help children and families get an impact in their lives. So far I have took six classes of 3 credits during my scholarship. It affected my career prolonging my time in the school, because I had to cancel an extra class due my low budget.

ECACE is an important support in my career as an early childhood teacher, since there is a great need for teachers at any educational level. However, I consider that in early childhood we are a crucial part in the development of our children, since it is the stage where we work with their physical, motor, cognitive, but above all, socio-emotional development. Nowadays, the excessive use of electronic devices has caused lack of sleep, dependency, and stress not only in adults, but also in our children, situations that affect their mental health and the way they communicate with the outside world. Therefore, I consider it of great importance that there is free access to the preschool level. That schools or centers have highly trained people to be able to guide our children in the best way, but above all, achieve a great impact on their lives, who are the future of our world. In my experience on this path, I can say that it has not been easy, the lack of resources to cover the expenses of the master's degree in Early Education, which I started in January of this year, for which I had the support of ECACE until summer, however for Fall it was not covered and when I applied to continue with the ECACE scholarship there was only help at the high school level. Nowadays it is difficult for me to cover the expenses of home, family and school since my position as a teacher, I could only be temporary while they found a person with a license in education, once they found one I was relocated to another area as a Parent Educator, where I am a wild card due to lack of trained personnel, because if a teacher or assistant is missing, I have to substitute her, but at the same time make home visits, give workshops to parents such as training to teach children to go to the bathroom, visit classrooms to make my observations and reports, where I have to provide feedback to teachers and parents. This in order to provide the community with the best resources available and make them available to them. As you can see, I have had to wear many hats in my workplace.

Takhara Scott, Educator

The ECACE Scholarship Program has been transformative for both my personal and professional growth. It has allowed me to pursue a degree in early childhood education without the overwhelming financial burden that might have otherwise prevented me from continuing my studies. On a personal level, this scholarship has given me the confidence to balance being a mother of six while advancing my education, proving to myself and my children that it's never too late to achieve your goals. Professionally, the program has enabled me to deepen my understanding of child development, gain new teaching strategies, and strengthen my leadership skills. With over 21 years of experience in the field, the knowledge I've gained has enhanced my ability to create meaningful learning experiences and advocate for the needs of young children and their families. This degree is not just a milestone for me—it's a vital step in furthering my career and providing the best possible education for the children I serve. Without the ECACE Scholarship, this growth and opportunity would not have been possible.

The ECACE Scholarship has been instrumental in advancing my early childhood education career. It provided the financial support necessary to pursue my degree, which has opened doors to new opportunities and helped me strengthen my skills as an educator. Thanks to the scholarship, I've been able to stay current on best practices in early childhood education, learn innovative teaching strategies, and deepen my knowledge of child development. These skills have directly improved the quality of education I provide, allowing me to better meet the diverse needs of the children and families I serve. One significant achievement I credit to the program is the progress I've made toward earning my degree, which will qualify me for leadership roles in the field. This is a pivotal step in my career as it not only validates over 21 years of experience but also positions me to make a greater impact in early childhood education. The scholarship has given me the confidence and resources to take my career to the next level, and with additional funding, I'm hopeful it will continue to empower educators like me to reach their full potential.

The underfunding of the ECACE Scholarship has significantly impacted me as I approach my final semester of earning my degree. While the scholarship has been a vital lifeline throughout my studies, the funding has now run out, leaving me uncertain about how I can afford to complete my education. This gap in support creates a major obstacle, despite the progress I've made and the sacrifices I've made to reach this point. If ECACE continues to be underfunded, it may prevent me from achieving my dream of earning my degree and advancing in my career. This degree is not just a credential—it's the culmination of over 21 years of dedication to early childhood education and the key to securing my future in this field. Without it, my ability to grow professionally, take on leadership roles, and make a larger impact in the lives of young children and their families is at risk. Underfunding ECACE not only affects individual recipients like me but also the quality of education and care that children in our communities receive. Without sufficient funding, many dedicated educators may be forced to put their dreams on hold or leave the field altogether, which would have a ripple effect on the future of early childhood education in Illinois. Increased funding is essential to ensure that educators like me can continue to pursue their goals and make meaningful contributions to the field.

Key decision-makers should know that the ECACE Scholarship has been a lifeline for me as a working mother of six and a dedicated early childhood educator with over 21 years of experience. This scholarship has allowed me to pursue my degree, removing financial barriers that would have made it impossible otherwise.

we, the village

Through this program, I've gained valuable knowledge and skills that have directly improved my ability to support young children's development and learning. However, as I approach my final semester, the funding has run out, leaving me unsure of how to complete my education. Without this support, I may not achieve my goal of earning a degree, which is essential for solidifying my career and providing the best education to the children I serve.

Decision-makers need to understand that underfunding programs like ECACE puts passionate, experienced educators at risk of being unable to advance their careers. Increased funding is not just about helping individuals—it's about strengthening the early childhood education workforce and ensuring high-quality care and education for children and families across Illinois.

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Kindall Smith, Educator

The ECACE (Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity) scholarship program has been instrumental in fostering both my personal and professional growth by providing access to the resources and opportunities I needed to develop as an educator. Through the program, I have gained deeper knowledge of early childhood education principles, effective teaching strategies, and child development theories, all of which have directly enhanced my ability to serve my students effectively. Professionally, the scholarship allowed me to pursue coursework that sharpened my skills in curriculum development, classroom management, and culturally responsive teaching. I've been able to apply these skills in real-time, creating engaging, inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of the children I serve. This practical application has strengthened my confidence as an educator and inspired me to take on leadership roles in my current teaching environment. On a personal level, the ECACE scholarship has instilled in me a greater sense of purpose and determination. As a first-generation college student and a teacher working in an exempt site, the financial support from ECACE alleviated significant stress and allowed me to focus on my academic journey. It empowered me to overcome challenges, stay committed to my goals, and continue striving to make a difference in the lives of children and families in underserved communities. While the recent cut in ECACE funding has presented new obstacles, the program has left a lasting impact on my educational journey. It has provided me with the foundational tools and confidence to continue growing as an educator and has reinforced my commitment to completing my bachelor's degree to further my impact in the field of early childhood education.

The ECACE scholarship has significantly advanced my early childhood education career by providing financial support that allowed me to focus on completing my degree and improving my teaching skills. It enabled me to access advanced coursework in child development, curriculum design, and culturally responsive teaching, which I have applied to create more effective and inclusive learning environments. Thanks to ECACE, I've been able to take on leadership roles in curriculum development and youth mentorship, directly impacting the quality of education for my students and contributing to my professional growth as an educator.

The underfunding of ECACE has placed a significant financial strain on my ability to complete my degree, making it difficult to cover tuition and other educational expenses. Without the full support of ECACE, I have had to navigate increased stress and uncertainty about how to fund my studies, which has diverted my focus from academic and professional growth. If this underfunding continues, it could delay the completion of my degree, limit my ability to take on advanced coursework, and slow my progress in becoming a more effective and credentialed early childhood educator. Ultimately, this would hinder my ability to fully serve my students and advance in my career.

The ECACE scholarship has been a transformative resource in my journey toward becoming a highly qualified early childhood educator. It not only alleviated financial burdens but also allowed me to focus entirely on my studies and professional development. With ECACE's support, I gained critical knowledge in child development and teaching strategies, which I have applied directly in my classroom to better serve my students.

However, the recent underfunding has disrupted this progress, creating financial and emotional challenges that threaten to delay my academic and career goals. Despite these setbacks, I remain deeply committed to completing my degree and advancing the quality of early childhood education, especially for underserved communities. ECACE has given me hope and a pathway to achieve this, and restoring full funding would enable many like me to continue making meaningful contributions to the field.

Amy Bradford, Home-based Provider

With the ECACE scholarship, I was able to finish my Master's Degree in early childhood administration. We know that there is a direct link between higher education of program staff and the higher quality of the program.

ECACE has significantly boosted my program management skills, the quality of my program, and with my newly earned master's degree, it will allow me to teach early education classes part-time at a community college.

With the cut in ECACE this fall semester, I was forced to pay for my classes out of pocket, which has put a strain on my savings account.

The ECACE scholarship encouraged me to finish my Master's Degree, something that was financially not possible before. Each class I needed to take was approximately $2,750 per class. I still have 3 children of my own that need to attend college, therefore I never would have pursued my Master's Degree if it had all been an out-of-pocket expense for me.

Anonymous, Childcare Assistant/SECA

Because of this scholarship I was able to go back to school. Didn't have to worry about having a debt from school or ask for a loan.

I have thought about not going back to school because I really don't want a debt.

It's a great opportunity for people like me that want to obtain a bachelor degree with no debts or loans. I'm a single mother raising four children that have two in college and the other two in high school. Trying to obtain my university degree is not easy.

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Maria Gallegos, Educator

The ECACE scholarship has provided me with the invaluable opportunity to return to school and advance my career as an early childhood educator. I strongly believe that it is essential for educators to continually seek opportunities for professional development in order to improve our teaching practices and expand our career prospects in this field. This scholarship has enabled me to undertake this important journey, especially as a single mother of two wonderful daughters, for whom I am wholly responsible following the passing of my husband last year. While this journey has been challenging, I recognized the necessity of furthering my education to create new opportunities for myself and my family. I am deeply grateful for the support this scholarship has offered in making my educational goals attainable.

The ECACE scholarship has provided me with the opportunity to pursue new courses that have enhanced my understanding and application of various methods to better support the children I work with. I have gained valuable insights into child development, fostered their curiosity about the world, and established a strong foundation for their future success, both academically and personally.

The underfunding of the ECACE scholarship program has significantly affected my ability to pursue my degree. It has led me to reassess my financial situation to ensure that I can adequately support my family while working towards my educational goals. Obtaining my degree is crucial for unlocking new opportunities; however, the lack of this scholarship may hinder my progress, as I might need to reduce my course load from two classes to one in order to mitigate financial strain.

The ECACE scholarship holds significant importance for many of us for various reasons. It has been a valuable resource in our academic journeys. Each of us faces unique circumstances and challenges that can impede our ability to complete our degrees and pursue our careers. However, the ECACE scholarship has undoubtedly provided substantial support, serving as a beacon of hope and motivation to continue striving for excellence. We seek your support to ensure we can continue providing assistance to the children of tomorrow.

Cindy Dukett, Educator/Teaching Assistant/Office Administrator/Teacher/Assistant Director

It allowed me to not have to worry about the financial part of going to school. I am over $135,000 in debt with student loans. So I was able to go back to school in the field I work in and not have to worry. Yes, it has helped me and it is continuing to help me. I have worked in Early Childhood for the past 15 years.

Since I am getting my masters, I had to find ways to have my school paid for. I did get approved for Gateway Scholarships which I have to pay for 10%.

I think by continuing the scholarship for all degrees, it will help more people look into the ECE field. We need to have teachers and administrators in ECE because the early years are the most important years in a child's life. And the people do not get into this field for the pay it is for the love of making a difference.

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Latasha Morris, Home-Based Provider

The ECACE scholarship program has been transformative in both my personal and professional journey. Through this opportunity, I've gained valuable skills and knowledge that are helping me grow as an educator and as an individual.

Professionally, the program has allowed me to advance my education in early childhood development, equipping me with the tools needed to create engaging, nurturing learning environments for young children. I've learned effective teaching strategies, child development theories, and classroom management skills that will prepare me to thrive as a full-time teacher. These lessons have also inspired me to think creatively and critically about how I can best serve my future students.

Personally, the scholarship has given me the confidence to pursue my dreams at 49 years old and to work diligently to maintain my place on the honor roll. It has shown me that it's never too late to invest in yourself and strive for excellence. Balancing school, work, and life responsibilities has strengthened my time management and perseverance, traits that will serve me well in both my career and personal life.

The ECACE program has been a catalyst for my growth, empowering me to reach new heights and inspiring me to make a meaningful impact in the lives of young learners. It has not only enhanced my professional qualifications but also my sense of purpose and determination to succeed.

The ECACE scholarship has been instrumental in advancing my career in early childhood education. It has provided me with the financial support needed to pursue my associate's degree, which I recently earned, and has positioned me to continue working toward my bachelor's degree. This achievement is a milestone not only for me but for my family, as I am the first to graduate from college.

The ECACE program has opened doors that once seemed out of reach. It has enabled me to stay focused on my studies without the overwhelming stress of financial burdens, allowing me to maintain a strong academic record. Being on the honor roll at 49 years old is an achievement I credit to the stability and support that ECACE has provided.

In addition, this program has given me the confidence and credentials to pursue my dream of becoming a full-time teacher. The scholarship has empowered me to continue developing my skills and knowledge, preparing me to make a lasting impact in the classroom and in the lives of the children I will serve.

Thanks to ECACE, I have been able to pursue opportunities that will shape my career and help me contribute meaningfully to the field of early childhood education. It has been a life-changing program, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities it has made possible.

Without the ECACE scholarship, I would not be able to complete my bachelor's degree. As a 49-year-old student working hard to stay on the honor roll, the scholarship has been critical to my ability to continue my education. It has alleviated the financial burden of pursuing higher education and allowed me to focus on excelling academically while balancing my responsibilities.

Underfunding ECACE would jeopardize my dream of becoming a full-time teacher after graduation. The scholarship provides me with the support I need to move forward in my studies and prepare for a meaningful career in early childhood education. Without this funding, I would face significant financial challenges that could prevent me from achieving my goals.

This program is not just about funding education; it's about providing individuals like me with the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young children. Investing in ECACE is an investment in the future of education and the dedicated teachers working to shape it.

Thank you for understanding the importance of this program and the role it plays in transforming lives and communities.

Tameakah Gant, Educator

Because of the ECACE and the career development navigator, I was able to enroll in my ideal university and complete course work leading to my degree while being able to work full time. The scholarship took so much stress off me financially allowing me to focus on school.

I have completed my directors credential and obtained my level 4 infant toddler credential. I have learned skills that allow me to assist parents navigate programs like Early Intervention. I have participated in councils like Birth to 5 Illinois and learned how to advocate for the children and families I serve.

Losing access to the scholarship due to funding has resulted in me pulling funds from my savings account to pay for school and use credit cards to fund my education increasing my debt. I am worried I won't be able to complete my degree with 15 credits left.

I believe the ECACE can make dreams reality. It can help teachers gain the qualifications they need to advance in the field without having to compromise their livelihood. I

Brittany Donaldson, Educator/Parent/Guardian/Teaching Assistant

The program gave me an opportunity to continue my education without stressing on how I'm going to pay. I'm a straight A student who gives all credit to ECACE for giving me a second chance.

The underfunding has impacted my extra money to pay for a babysitter for my three children. I now have to find other ways to make money so I can pay for babysitting.

The ECACE is a life changer and single mothers like myself need the help because I have no extra income to continue my education.

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Caitlin Reusche, Educator

I am so thankful for the ECACE scholarship! It allowed me to finish coursework for my Early Childhood Credential. I also had the opportunity to take an education business class which was so eye-opening and really pushed me as a learner.

I was able to secure my early childhood teacher credential and move lanes within CPS.
I wish I could have continued on to a Masters program. I really enjoyed the early childhood administration course. This is such an important scholarship for educators. Please continue to fund it.

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Sherry Murry, Lead Teacher

This ECACE scholarship has been blessed to me, this scholarship alone has saved me money where I don't have to pay anything. This was a great opportunity for me to complete my BA through this scholarship. I think about now and ask myself what if I didn't do where I am now. I have worked so hard in completing the course I need to move forward in my field. As an Early Childhood teacher I learn you have to take chances if you want to do better here opportunity for you to get your feet wet. This journey has given me more options to see how I see my future. If I had another chance to receive this scholarship I would go for my master in early childhood. I have gained so much knowledge and growth through this journey alone and with my god this is not over for me.

The ECACE program has help to be more prepare in the classroom and allow myself to be more in tune what I learn what online with all the teachers and support from the advisory too

Yes that true I may be one of the students that didn't get scholarships it can affect me in many ways. One I am not able to attend the next quarter , they may not have funds to help me finish my journey so this can have an impact on me too.

I say this experience has opened my eyes even more about going back to school and making sure you keep your GPA at a searcher level where you still receive the scholarship but they let you know you have a chance to still build your GPA but I learn how to work hard to get back on track.

Jamie Nunn, Advocate/Supporter

If it weren't for the ECACE scholarship program, I could not have dreamed to go back to school. Being given the opportunity to finish my bachelors, has been such a blessing. I have learned so much through the classes and have been able to use what I have learned in my professional setting.

The ECACE program is assisting me in becoming Director level 2. This credential will bring better opportunities to my centers. I would not have been able to pay to go back to school if it weren't for the ECACE scholarship.

The underfunding has been stressful on me. I am so close to finishing my degree. I have one quarter left after this one. As you can imagine, I don't want to put my educational journey on pause when I am so close to the finish line. However, the uncertainty of payments has put a lot of stress on me and my family.

The ECACE program is such a blessing to those of us working in the field. As you know, early childhood educators are hardly paid enough to survive in this economy. Being a mother of three with a mortgage, my full time job barely pays for the necessities of life. People in my position shouldn't have to choose between furthering their education and paying bills.

Anonymous Childcare Assistant

ECACE has helped provide me with a good college experience and education to go after my dreams. I was able to begin my journey of my bachelors degree.

The underfunding has made it very hard for me to keep going to school because unfortunately teachers don't make a lot of money and school costs a lot. Not having the funding for this school year has been hard and I am struggling financially.

This scholarship was very helpful and saved me when it came to school funding. Paying out of pocket for a university when only making $17 an hour is hard, close to impossible. It's delaying being able to by a house and start my family. Also is causing me to cut down the amount of classes I take. I hope a change is able to come for myself and other struggling teachers.

Tierra Clark - Harris, Teaching Assistant

I loved it. I had gone back to school but couldn't finish due to the scholarship no longer being offered to grad students. I had to drop out since I no longer had the funds to continue.

Please bring the scholarship back …for GRADS … there are some really grateful people that would really do well with the assistance . I absolutely love the scholarship and wish I could have continued

Miriam Galva, Educator

This scholarship hed help me to become a pearson who can be able to teach in a inclusive classroom teaching young children from the age of infant through the third grade helping them to develop the skills that they need to succeed in school and their future life , and also help their families with resources to work with their children at home

Theis scholarship helped me to achieve a bachelor degree in Early childhood education and also I am still working to pursue a master degree in curriculum and instruction for ELL students with disability.

Now I was getting funding at the beginning of the year for my master degree but the scholarship is not available anymore. I need to pay for my fall classes and four more classes that I need to finish my master degree.

I think it is very important to continue with the scholarship to prepare teachers for the future to teach and prepare children for the future generation.Please keep on providing us the scholarship we need.

Maria Angelica Perez, Educator

Thank you for sharing this opportunity to provide testimony on the importance of the ECACE program. I am happy to share my testimonial, as this initiative has been instrumental in my educational and professional journey. However, I regret to inform you that I am unable to attend the ISAC Board Meeting on December 5. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Early Childhood Administration, a milestone that would not have been possible without the support of the ECACE grant. The grant also enabled me to complete my Bachelor's degree, which opened doors to a better job with improved pay and benefits. Because of this opportunity, I was able to achieve a personal dream of enrolling my children in Catholic school, giving them access to a quality education that aligns with our values.

Now, as I approach the final stages of my Master's program—just three quarters away—I serve as the Assistant Site Supervisor for a Head Start program. My ultimate goal is to transition into a managerial role within my organization, where I can further contribute to the field while securing greater financial stability for my family. As a first-generation student, this journey is deeply meaningful to me. Earning my Master's degree represents not only a personal achievement but also a legacy for my children, who see me as a role model striving for excellence. None of this would have been possible without the ECACE grant, which has truly transformed my life and my family's future.

How has ECACE underfunding impacted you? The underfunding of ECACE has had a significant impact on my educational journey. While I am forever grateful for the support I received to complete my Bachelor's degree and partial funding for my Master's program, the funding did not extend to cover the entirety of my graduate studies. Unfortunately, this meant that I had to take out a loan to pay for the remainder of my Master's program, which added financial pressure. How might underfunding ECACE impact your studies and career? Despite the financial challenges, I am deeply appreciative of the opportunities the ECACE grant provided, as they have been life-changing. Without this support, I may not have been able to complete my Bachelor's degree or even begin my Master's program. However, had the funding been available to fully support my graduate studies, it would have alleviated the burden of loans and allowed me to focus more fully on my education and professional development. The ECACE grant enabled me to pursue higher education, secure a better job with improved pay and benefits, and take steps toward achieving my ultimate goal of advancing in my career as a Head Start leader. Underfunding programs like ECACE limits opportunities for individuals like me to reach their full potential and, by extension, to contribute even more significantly to the communities we serve.
The ECACE scholarship has truly changed my life. Thanks to this support, I have been able to pursue higher education and create a brighter future for my family. My children are now in a safe and supportive environment, and I am making a meaningful difference in my community through my work in Early Childhood Education.

This scholarship has allowed me to grow personally and professionally, and I am committed to continuing this growth to help my community prosper. Funding ECACE is vital because it empowers individuals like me—ambitious, eager, and determined—to strive for excellence and make a lasting impact. Many of my colleagues who have also benefited from this grant share the same drive to serve and uplift their communities. We want to make a difference, but we need your help. Continued funding for ECACE ensures that passionate professionals like myself can achieve their goals, expand our reach, and ultimately improve the lives of the children and families we serve. Thank you for supporting this essential program and for recognizing its profound impact on individuals, families, and communities.

Liza Kobernik, Childcare Assistant

I cannot easily put into words how much I have learned and how much more confidence I now have as a teacher. I have wanted to complete my bachelor's for 20+ years but could never afford to do it. This scholarship has changed my life!!

I am now able to lead a class and hope to open my own center someday!

This year is a bit scarier than last. I am low income, and any costs to me are a challenge. I hope I can complete my degree.

I am 52, have been working with children for 35 years because there is nothing I would rather do more. I was a passenger in a terrible car accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury. I never thought I could finish college. Life has been a challenge financially and that was an additional obstacle. This scholarship took my fears away and made me work three times harder to prove I deserve it. I am so grateful for this scholarship and the opportunities it will provide.

Anonymous Teaching Assistant

Without the ECACE scholarship I could not have gone back to school. I need this scholarship to continue my career and become a kindergarten teacher. ECACE helped me by starting my career and my education.

ECACE underfunding has impacted me because now I have to pay out of pocket and put my tuition in credit cards, since I do not get FAFSA. This has affected me to have debt in my credit cards.

I think that ECACE will be good for students like me that actually want to continue our career. I have experienced that many students like me do not continue our education because of economic reasons. The lack of resources and funding will affect me directly because I will be unable to continue my education without being in debt. As a parent I have to pay mortgage and bills and I do not want more debt, I want to accomplish my goals to have a better future.

Anonymous Advocate/Supporter

This scholarship has saved me. It has helped me continue my education without the stress. Because of this scholarship, I am going back to school to be a teacher. I have worked as an in-home daycare provider for 16 years, but I am ready to get out of my home and into a career. This scholarship is the only reason I can do that.

It is stressful knowing this scholarship might not be there to help me finish. If I can not resume with the ECACE scholarship, I am not sure I will be able to finish school. We need teachers and providers; this helps them decide to continue school.

This scholarship has been a blessing to me. It has helped me in more ways than I can describe. I suggest it to people when they think maybe going back to school is for them.

Alexis Smith, Home-based Provider

I was able to accomplish my goal to obtain my bachelor's in Early Childhood Education.

ECACE helped me to future my education in early childhood education and with what I have learned it helped me to become a stronger educator when it came to teaching children of all ages. Also I learn how to set up the environment that children need to learn through play and grow.

Without ECACE funding I can not continue my education working toward obtaining my master's in early childhood education in administration and then I can gain the ability to continue teaching children in the way that help children to learn from play and to grow to be health, develop a learning ability that will help them make it through life.

The ECACE scholarship is a blessing to me. Why? ECACE is a dream come true for me at my age. Thank you.

Anonymous Advocate/Supporter;Educator;Parent/Guardian

I wouldnt have been able to finish my degree without! Its truly life changing that I was able to obtain this scholarship and I pray for others to receive the same type of blessing that it has given to me.

I am able to become a developmental therapist in the Spring and move forward with taking minors as well.

Being underfunded has burdened my finances for school its a bit of a struggle to try to get everything with it being so dramactically low.

Its saves lives, it will impact teachers greatly and overall will effect the education system. WE are important parts of the community and our training is dependent on grants and scholarships.

Lisa Spewak, Advocate/Supporter; Center Director

This scholarship allowed me to finally pursue a Master's Degree in Early Childhood, the career that I have been on for over 30 years. I was able to take my BS in Early Childhood and extend my knowledge. ECACE was the kickstart for me to pursue this personal goal. It has also inspired me to apply what I am learning to my current administrative position as well as to begin looking into teaching the next generations of early childhood professionals.

The ECACE grant has inspired me to remain in the field I love, to educate the educators in a more informed practice, and to investigate teaching education professionals.

When the funding for Graduate degrees stopped last July, I was fully prepared to stop working towards my master's degree. The Jewish United Fund Early Childhood Collaborative believes that this is so critical to the field that they stepped in to pay for the remainder of my education. I know others in my graduate rotation who have remained in school, but are now facing debt in order to finish their degree. The field is already underpaid and this is just another negative impact on the educators working to push the field forward.

Please begin to look at the broader impact the ECACE grant has on the Early Childhood field at large. The requirements for Directors continue to grow. If the field continues to shrink, and it is definitely is due to low pay, little to no benefits in most instances, there will be no qualified directors in the State of Illinois. This funding is not only critical to the growth and potential to this field, but the impact on young children who have access to high quality programming (taught by highly qualified early childhood educators) will have exponential results. The State needs to ensure that early childhood professionals have access to this funding.

we, the village

Amanda, Child Care Provider

Amanda, a dedicated childcare provider was honored to receive the ECACE scholarship and graduate with a bachelor's degree with the help of the Brightpoint CCR&R Higher Education Navigators, Sara Seitz and Hannah Howell. This achievement reflects her commitment to advancing her Early Childhood Education. She was able to start at a 2-year institution and complete her associate's degree, then advance into an accelerated program to obtain her bachelor's degree.

Amanda receives invaluable support from Brightpoint, a resource that helps Early Childhood care professionals with professional development and grant opportunities. With Brightpoint, Amanda has been well equipped to meet the diverse needs as a Childcare Director, ensuring she can obtain the highest quality of care. Her journey exemplifies the power of education and community in fostering a thriving environment for young learners.

While working with Amanda and her center, Sara was able to provide support with other staff members continuing education and providing support with filling out paperwork and warm connections to the institutions to provide a comforting start into higher education. Amanda has also done a great job supporting her staff and community, and been accommodating for us to provide that support from the Brightpoint CCR&R.