

Agudath Israel of Illinois Lauds Bi-Partisan Solution to Scholarship Tax Credit Program Impasse

On Friday, January 26, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner announced the adoption of a policy to include previously excluded schools in Illinois' new tax credit scholarship program, the Invest in Kids Act. The breakthrough came after the Rauner administration, a bi-partisan group of lawmakers, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR), and advocates including Agudath Israel of Illinois worked together to find an expedient way to include as many of these schools as possible without compromising the integrity of the program.

The Invest in Kids Act was part of an historic bipartisan school funding bill signed in 2017 which included a \$100 million scholarship tax credit program for low- and middle-income families. Unfortunately, a provision in the law that requires schools to be "recognized" by ISBE, prevented 257 registered schools, many of which cater to disadvantaged children, from participating in the program. Since the most recent official list of recognized schools is from 2016, this provision excluded schools that applied for recognition but have not yet been approved, and even schools that are currently recognized, but not on ISBE's 2016 list. As a result, students who wished to attend high-quality schools, including some Jewish schools, were not eligible to receive scholarships.

After weeks of discussions between the aforementioned parties including Agudath Israel of Illinois (AIIOI), ISBE generated a new updated list of recognized schools that include all

schools that were recognized in 2017 and allowed schools that have a recognition visit scheduled to provisionally participate pending the outcome of ISBE's visit.

[In a statement](#) released by the Governor's office, advocates, including AIOI, were acknowledged and quoted. "Following discussions with stakeholders, a solution ensuring the participation of all schools that become recognized was achieved," said Rabbi Shlomo Soroka, AIOI's director of government affairs. "Agudath Israel of Illinois thanks the Rauner Administration, the bipartisan group of legislators, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Revenue, and advocates, who worked together to provide quality educational options to more students."

[Download \(PDF, 211KB\)](#)