

## Florida's 2016 Legislative Session moves children forward



Most child welfare advocates in Florida agree: the 2016 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature was a relatively good one for children. The session officially drew to a close on March 11, 2016. A summary issued by [The Children's Movement of Florida](#) noted several wins: \$10M more for School Readiness to support quality pre-school education, \$15.5M to promote higher quality in early learning programs, \$2.45M for Help Me Grow, a parent resource in half of Florida counties, \$13M for the Early Steps intervention program for children with special needs, and last but definitely not least, KidCare legislation – sought after for years – to remove a five-year waiting period for children of legal immigrants to access health insurance.

In a [by-the-numbers infographic](#), The Children's Campaign celebrated the above wins, plus the lowering of the age for expunging juvenile records and the making of non-felony juvenile records confidential, as well as the successful push for a trauma-informed crisis response system for sex-trafficked children and stronger laws for adult perpetrators. The [Florida Guardian ad Litem Program highlighted the Governor's signing](#) on March 23<sup>rd</sup> of SB 590, allowing judges to consider the best interests of the child when making adoption decisions. This past week the Governor also signed SB 860, designating the second week of February as "Foster Family Appreciation Week". SB 818, the companion bill to HB 469, both of which would have required specific training for physicians and other health care professionals in how to identify victims of human trafficking, reached the Senate floor but died on the calendar.

FFCR looks forward to remaining engaged in the push to improve the future of Florida's children in the next legislative session.