

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

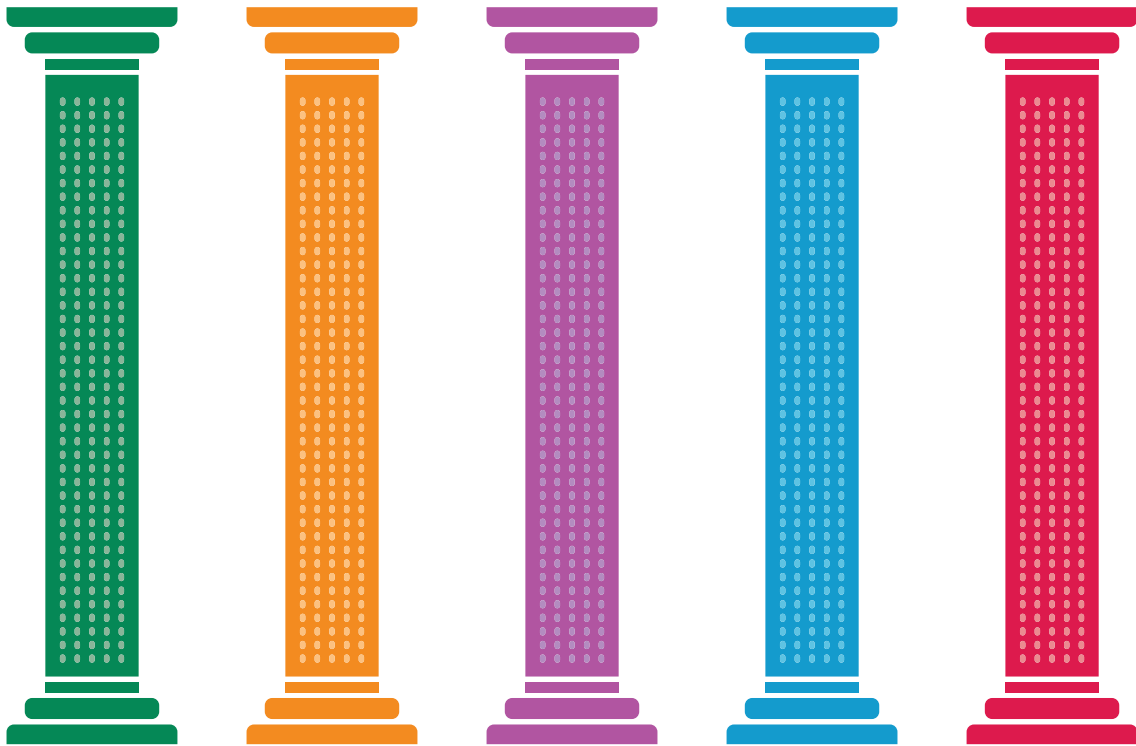


INTERAGENCY WORKGROUP
ON POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INSECURITY





Illinois Commission
on Poverty Elimination
and Economic Security



Pillar 1:

Ensure IL is Best in Nation for Raising Families

Pillar 2:

Stabilize Homes and Communities

Pillar 3:

Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs

Pillar 4:

Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement

Pillar 5:

Support Trusted Community Based Providers to Serve the Needs of those In Deep Poverty

Introduction

The Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security was created in order to “*end the intergenerational transmission of poverty by addressing root causes of economic insecurity, racial disparities, and other contributing social, economic, and cultural factors*” by the [Intergenerational Poverty Act \(IPA\)](#) in June 2020. The Commission’s purpose is to improve policy makers’ understanding of the root causes of poverty and economic insecurity in Illinois, support efforts to ensure residents have equal opportunity to achieve economic security, and ultimately reduce and eliminate poverty in Illinois by making policy and other recommendations to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the State.

The Intergenerational Poverty Act also established the Interagency Working Group on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security to advance the Commission’s work by studying systems that perpetuate poverty, improve interagency coordination, and implement policies and programs that break the cycle of poverty.

After seeking extensive community and stakeholder input, on March 31, 2022, the Commission issued a five-year strategic plan to meet its three statutory goals, including:

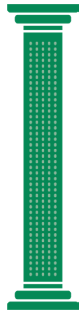
- 1) Reduce Deep Poverty in the State by 50% by 2026
- 2) Eliminate Child Poverty in the State by 2031
- 3) Eliminate All Poverty in the State by 2036

To address these goals, the Committee developed a strategic plan with five overarching objectives, including:

- 1) Ensure IL is Best in Nation for Raising Families
- 2) Stabilize Homes and Communities
- 3) Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs
- 4) Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement
- 5) Support Trusted Community Based Providers to Serve the Needs of those In Deep Poverty

This report describes the State’s response to the strategic plan in Fiscal Year 2023 and outlines commitments for Fiscal Year 2024. Consistent with statutory requirements, we will continue to issue annual reports on our progress for the full period of the strategic plan.

**Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security
Five-Year Strategic Plan Pillars and Associated State Actions**



Pillar 1: Ensure IL is Best in Nation for Raising Families
Ensure Access to High Quality Early Childhood Services
Explore Methods for Tax Credit Support for Families Raising Children in Poverty
Expand Access to Free and Reduced School Meals
Increase Participation in WIC by Improving Accessibility for Those Who are Eligible

State Actions

Ensure Access to High Quality Early Childhood Services

In June of 2022, Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced new investments to strengthen and grow Illinois’ early childhood education and care field.¹ Over \$175 million in funding took effect July 1, 2022, to support childcare providers and decrease financial burden for working families. This funding includes a set of initiatives to increase Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement rates for all providers through 2022, increasing the CCAP income eligibility limit to include families with incomes below 225% of the Federal Poverty Line, and lowering copays for CCAP-eligible families.

Additionally, the funding extended and expanded existing grant programs like the Child Care Restoration Grant and the Strengthen and Grow Child Care Grant (SGCC) through July 2023.² On November 14, 2022, the Governor and IDHS Division of Early Childhood (DEC) announced additional investments to support working families of young children in Illinois.³ These funds enable families to access more CCAP benefits and provide funding for eligible childcare centers and homes.

Looking ahead, the Smart Start program, part of the FY24 budget, will make a \$250 million investment in programs and \$100 million in facilities to provide every child with access to preschool, increase funding to childcare providers to raise wages and quality, invest in new expanded early childhood facilities, and reach more vulnerable families. The program will add 5,000 new preschool spots across the state in the 2023-2024 school year. It also supports wage increases and support stability for the child care sector, as well as funding to serve additional families through the Child Care Assistance Program and support upgrades to the Child Care Management System (CCMS).⁴

Explore Methods for Tax Credit Support for Families Raising Children in Poverty

In July of 2022, the Illinois Family Relief Plan went into effect and provided residents with an estimated \$1.83 billion in relief through tax cuts on essentials amid historic rates of inflation.⁵ The plan included several tax holidays on groceries, gas, and school supplies. In addition, the plan permanently expanded the state’s earned income credit from 18% to 20% of the federal credit, while expanding the number of households covered, putting an additional \$100 million per

1. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25040.html>
 2. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=136001>
 3. <https://iecam.illinois.edu/news/governor-pritzker-announces-new-investments-in-child-care>
 4. <https://www.actforchildren.org/blogs/hl-admin/2023/05/30/103rd-general-assembly-passes-smart-start-illinois#:~:text=Funding%20increases%20for%20early%20childhood,create%205%2C000%20new%20preschool%20slots>
 5. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25129.html>

year back into the pockets of working families who need it the most. Individuals who made less than \$200,000 in 2021 received \$50 income tax rebates. Couples filing jointly with incomes under \$400,000 received \$100. Tax filers also received \$100 per dependent they claimed on their 2021 taxes, up to three dependents.

Expand Access to Free and Reduced School Meals

The Illinois Commission to End Hunger reported in their “2021 Year in Review” that the IDHS will begin using text and email to communicate with clients, creating greater reach to participants and increasing the likelihood of participants meeting important deadlines to maintain enrollment in nutrition benefits.⁶ Additionally, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) received funding to create a statewide online school meals application, which will streamline the application process ensuring easier application and processing for families and administrators.

In addition to providing electronic applications for students to enroll in breakfast and lunch, the IDHS has also taken steps toward making the SNAP application and case management website mobile friendly to expand access to those that may not have a personal computer or Wi-Fi.

Increase Participation in WIC by Improving Accessibility for Those Who are Eligible

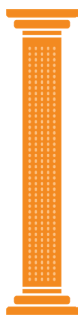
As of September 2022, income guidelines have increased for the Women’s Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program, allowing more families in Illinois to qualify.⁷ According to the Southern Seven Health Department, a family of four can now earn up to \$51,338 and still qualify for WIC.⁸ These increases became effective in July of 2022.



6. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=139301>

7. https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/news/wic-income-guidelines-increase-in-illinois-more-access-for-families/article_ecd74b1e-3f49-11ed-b09c-7737249cfd4.html

8. <https://southern7.org/clinics-southern-7-health-department/clinic-services-southern-7-health-department/wic-southern-7-health-department/>



Pillar 2: Stabilize Homes and Communities

Address Homelessness and Housing Affordability and Accessibility

Support the Crisis Care Continuum

Address Trauma Associated with Deep and Persistent Poverty

State Actions

Address Homelessness and Housing Affordability and Accessibility

In March of 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) was signed into law and appropriated \$5 billion to help communities provide housing, shelter, and services for people experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness and other vulnerable populations.⁹ The State of Illinois received \$62 million in HOME-ARP funds, with funds available through September 20, 2030. The funding will go towards investing and financing permanent supportive housing, rehabilitation and upgrading existing shelters, and providing rental assistance and supportive services.

The Illinois HOME-ARP allocation plan requires qualifying populations to be individuals or families who are¹⁰

- 1) Homeless
- 2) At-risk of homelessness
- 3) Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, stalking or human trafficking
- 4) Part of other populations where providing supportive services or assistance would prevent a family’s homelessness or would serve those with the greatest risk of housing instability
- 5) Veterans and families that include a veteran family member that meet the criteria in any one of the (1-4) above

The HOME-ARP production housing goals are 250 non-congregate shelter beds and 40 units of Permanent Supportive/ Transitional/Rapid Rehousing statewide. Rental Housing eligibility will focus on persons existing institutions and reentering into Illinois communities, youth aging out of the foster care system, and families with children.

Most recently, the Governor’s FY24 budget dedicated \$350 million (an \$85 million increase) to support the work of Home Illinois, an interagency initiative, focused on preventing and ending homelessness. Investments include more than \$118 million to support unhoused populations seeking shelter and services, \$50 million in Rapid Re-Housing services for 2,000 households; \$40 million to develop more than 90 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units, \$37 million to create more than 460 non-congregate shelter units; more than \$35 million for supportive housing services homeless youth services, street outreach, medical respite, re-entry services, access to counsel and other shelter diversion supports; \$30 million for court-based rental assistance; \$21.8 million to provide homelessness prevention services to 6,000 more families; \$15 million to fund Home Illinois Innovations Pilots; \$12.5 million to create 500 new scattered site PSH units.¹¹

9. <https://www.ihda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/IHDA-HOME-ARP-Public-Comment-Hearing-8.16.22.pdf>
 10. https://www.ihda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Sol-HOME-ARP_Alloc-Plan_AS-APPROVED-by-HUD.pdf
 11. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26561.html>

Support the Crisis Care Continuum

In June of 2022, Governor Pritzker signed Senate Bill 3617, omnibus legislation aimed at addressing the shortage of mental health professionals in Illinois and increasing access to high-quality mental health services across the State. The legislation removes barriers to those wishing to re-enter the mental health workforce, such as continuing education credit completion, passing additional examinations, and fee payments. Former license holders must be in good standing to have their licenses reactivated. Mental health professionals out of practice for less than five years may restore their license with IDFPR only once without providing more information to the Department.

Additionally, the bill allows the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Mental Health (DMH) to award grants or contracts to enhance training and supervision of behavioral health providers-in-training seeking licensure in specified fields.

In July 2022, the 988 system, a national three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for individuals experiencing mental health crises, rolled out.¹² The 988 system has the potential to benefit about 39 million people annually (the estimated total number of individuals experiencing a suicidal or broader mental health and substance use crisis with means to contact 988).¹³ In comparison, about 12 million people reportedly called the Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), its local/regional crisis centers (through their local number in addition to the Lifeline), and 911 for mental health or suicidal crises (i.e., subset serviced today) each year.

Callers to 988 have the option to select the Veterans Crisis Line or the Spanish language Crisis Line. If the caller with an Illinois area code does not select either of these options, they will be routed to an Illinois Life Line Call Center. Callers who are connected with the Illinois Life Line will receive specialized, individualized support by Certified Crisis Workers trained in suicide prevention, de-escalation and stabilization, and resources. The Illinois Life Line will continue to work closely with the mobile crisis outreach teams across the state to support anybody who needs in-person intervention by a crisis-trained person.¹⁴

In July of 2022 the Governor and Attorney General Raoul announced next steps in the national \$26 billion opioid settlement agreement with the nation's three major pharmaceutical distributors in combating the opioid epidemic.¹⁵ The IDHS will distribute the portion of the funds coming to the State equitably, based on recommendations from an advisory board, chaired by the State's Chief Behavioral Health Officer and made up of State and local appointees. The funding is expected to support critical recovery and treatment programs throughout the state.

Address Trauma Associated with Deep and Persistent Poverty

In addition to 988, the state has also acknowledged that the expansions of mobile crisis response are just the first major initiatives in a larger vision to strengthen the crisis safety network for people experiencing behavioral health crises. The Division of Mental Health (DMH) is also funding "Living Rooms" to break the cycle of psychiatric hospitalization and 11 Crisis Residential Programs to provide a transition from specialized community care.¹⁶

The [Reimagine Public Safety Act \(RPSA\) \(430 ILCS 69\)](#), (RPSA) signed into law in June 2021 and amended in November 2021, created the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention (OFVP) at the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). The RPSA is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention in response to the State of Illinois' heightened experience of loss, harm, and trauma by the hands of firearm violence, especially during the COVID-19 lock down. As of June 2023, IDHS has awarded almost 200 grants statewide to reduce Illinois' firearm violence through targeted, integrated behavioral health services and economic opportunities.

12. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=135439#:~:text=988%20Suicide%20%26%20Crisis%20Lifeline%20Information&text=IDHS%2FDMH%20partnered%20with%20the,rolled%20out%20in%20July%202022>

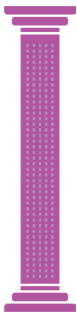
13. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=143815>

14. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=145089>

15. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25240.html>

16. <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/News/1083/The-complicated-path-to-expand-Illinois-behavioral-health-system-of-crisis-care/news-detail/>

In March of 2022, Governor JB Pritzker launched the Children’s Behavioral Health Transformation Initiative (“Transformation Initiative”) to evaluate and redesign the delivery of behavioral health services for children and adolescents in Illinois and ensure that every young person experiencing mental or behavioral health problems can access needed services. In its first year, the initiative accomplished key milestones including engagement with key stakeholders, analysis of data and policies and best practices, and cross-agency coordination to ensure collaborative and consistent approaches.¹⁷ In February of 2023, the Initiative released a report including 12 recommendations to meet its goals such as creating a centralized resource for families seeking services for children, increasing capacity to serve more children and families, and strengthening the workforce.¹⁸



Pillar 3: Ensure Just and Equitable Access to Economic Security Programs

Create an Open Door to Benefits Enrollment

Increase Uptake, Access, and Value of Public Benefits for Those in Extreme Poverty

Utilize Direct Cash Assistance Programs to Provide a Stable Platform for Lifting Families Out of Poverty

State Actions

Create an Open Door to Benefits Enrollment

Illinois was selected to be part of a cohort of states that will be participating in the Code for America Safety Net Innovation Lab.¹⁹ The Innovation Lab works with states to improve the equity and accessibility of core safety net benefits by designing human-centered tools and technologies for benefits enrollment and management. In the initial partnership phase, Code for America will provide pro bono coding support to simplify and streamline the Child Care Assistance Program, with potential additional improvements going forward.

Increase Uptake, Access, and Value of Public Benefits for Those in Extreme Poverty

The Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD) is helping increase access and awareness to food pantries, meal programs, and distribution partners throughout Chicago through their “find food map.”²⁰ With the map, Chicagoans can view hours, locations, and information for all food pantries and food programs in Chicago and Cook County.

The GCFD is also helping identify possible indicators of need for food assistance at the local level with the GCFD Community Data Map, which utilizes Census data on poverty, food insecurity, and other related issues across Cook County to monitor the need for food assistance at the local level.²¹ The Map lists the percentage of residents living below 185% of the federal poverty level by Census tract, 2016-2020. The “find food map” and the GCFD Community Data Map are helping move towards a more stable and food-secure future.

The State FY24 budget includes increases in TANF funding to offset a growing caseload, make inflation adjustments and increase eligibility from 30 percent to 35 percent of the federal poverty level. The impact from this proposed change on a single parent family is estimated at \$112 a month, or \$1,344 annually.²²

17. <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/Documents/childrens-health-web-021523.pdf>

18. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26110.html>

19. <https://codeforamerica.org/programs/social-safety-net/>

20. <https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/find-food/>

21. <https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/get-involved/learn/community-data-map/>

22. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26561.html>

In January of 2022, Governor Pritzker reminded eligible taxpayers to take advantage of both the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC).²³ Taxpayers eligible for the federal EIC also automatically qualify for the Illinois EIC. Illinois' EIC is a refundable tax credit, meaning that the credit can not only reduce the dollar amount people may be liable to pay back in taxes but can also result in a refund if the credit is greater than the total amount they owe.²⁴

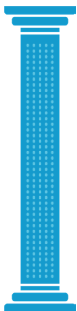
Starting tax year 2023, Illinois' EIC will increase to 20 percent and eligibility has been expanded to childless workers aged 18 to 24 and 65 and older, as well as immigrants who file taxes using an ITIN number. To be eligible for tax year 2022 (tax returns filed in 2023), taxpayers must have received "earned income" in 2022, meet certain income and residency qualifications, and file a tax return even if they do not owe any tax or are not required to file. For the 2022 tax year, the earned income credit ranges from \$560 to \$6,935, depending on the number of children claimed on the return.

Utilize Direct Cash Assistance Programs to Provide a Stable Platform for Lifting Families Out of Poverty

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is partnering with the Inclusive Economy Lab (IEL) to launch and evaluate pilot program that offers an estimated 665 families experiencing homelessness an unconditional one-time cash transfer of \$10,000. Current focus communities include Cook County, St. Clair County and Peoria County. The goal of the program is to help families exit shelter quickly; invest in solutions that may help address the unique underlying factors contributing to their housing instability; and prevent returns to homelessness. The pilot is expected to launch in 2023.

In 2022, Chicago and Cook County launched guaranteed income programs that will provide a total of more than 8,000 residents with \$500 a month for two years to provide economic stability, opportunity, and security.²⁵

In addition to the statewide program, additional jurisdictions such as the City of Chicago, Cook County, Champaign County and the City of Evanston have launched guaranteed income pilots.^{26,27,28,29} Similar to the program above, all programs are being evaluated to assess their impact on poverty.



Pillar 4: Address Barriers to Paid Work, Education, and Advancement

Remove Barriers That Prevent Consistent Work at a Living Wage

Enhance Barrier Reduction So Individuals Can Learn and Train While Supporting Their Family

Ensure Meaningful and Equitable Access to Illinois Courts and Legal Systems

State Actions

Remove Barriers That Prevent Consistent Work at a Living Wage

Criminal records can represent a substantial and seemingly insurmountable barrier to employment.³⁰ The passage of Public Act 101-27 in 2019 made records related to an offense deemed a "Minor Cannabis Offense" became eligible for expungement. Under this new law, the Illinois State Police (ISP) and all law enforcement agencies within the State are

23. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25974.html>

24. <https://www.newamerica.org/chicago/briefs/tax-filing-without-the-headaches/>

25. <https://news.wttw.com/2022/07/24/chicago-s-guaranteed-income-pilot-launches-leaders-hope-see-work-replicated>

26. <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=145659>

27. https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2023/february/ChicagoResiliencyFund2AcceptingApplications.html

28. <https://healthinstitute.illinois.edu/community-impact/community-academic-partnerships/community-academic-scholars/projects/champaign-county-guaranteed-income-pilot>

29. <https://www.cityofevanston.org/residents/guaranteed-income-program>

30. <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/after-the-sentence-more-consequences/national-snapshot/>

required to automatically expunge eligible “Minor Cannabis Offense” criminal history records of arrest within specified time parameters.³¹

To facilitate this effort, Cook County State’s Attorney Kimberly Foxx and Code for America announced a partnership to use Clear My Record technology to automatically clear thousands of eligible cannabis convictions in Cook County under the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act.³²

In December of 2022, Illinois received more than \$250 million for broadband expansion from the American Rescue Plan Act.³³ The White House estimates that money will be able to provide 87,163 households and businesses in Illinois with broadband internet, or about a quarter of the places in the state that currently lack high speed internet. Illinois is also getting an additional \$6 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act to expand internet access and digital equity in the state. The Illinois government has also made an agreement with several Internet Service Providers to offer the Affordable Connectivity Program, broadband plans for \$30 a month or less to low-income households.

Starting in 2023, the Illinois minimum wage increased from \$12 an hour to the new required minimum wage of \$13 an hour.³⁴ The minimum wage for workers who regularly earn tips will increase to \$7.80 an hour on January 1; these workers must still earn the minimum wage after receiving tips, or the employer is required to make up the difference. Workers under 18 who work fewer than 650 hours a year will earn a minimum wage of \$10.50 per hour beginning January 1. There have been five increases in the state minimum wage since Governor JB Pritzker signed historic legislation in 2019 that establishes a schedule of wage increases, putting Illinois on the path to a \$15 an hour minimum wage and \$9 for tipped workers by 2025.



Enhance Barrier Reduction So Individuals Can Learn and Train While Supporting Their Family

The Governor’s 2024 budget included a \$100 million increase to \$701 million for Monetary Assistance Program (MAP) grant funding, so that virtually everyone at or below the median income can go to community college for free. This funding is the latest step in a 75 percent increase for MAP since 2019.³⁵

Ensure Meaningful and Equitable Access to Illinois Courts and Legal Systems

In 2021, the Illinois Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity-Today (SAFE-T) Act enacts extensive reform impacting many areas of the criminal justice system, including pre-arrest diversion, policing, pretrial, sentencing, and corrections. The Act covers three areas of criminal justice reform —policing, pretrial, and corrections (jails and prisons).

In December of 2022, Governor Pritzker signed HB1095, a series of amendments and clarifications to the landmark SAFE-T Act.³⁶ The bill addresses misinformation related to the Act, including clarifying the detention net, expanding processes for transitioning to cashless bail on January 1st, and specifying definitions of willful flight and dangerousness, among other changes.

31. <https://isp.illinois.gov/BureauOfIdentification/CannabisExpungements>

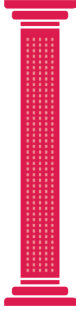
32. <https://codeforamerica.org/news/cook-county-states-attorney-kimberly-foxx-and-code-for-america-announce-historic-partnership-to-automatically-clear-convictions/>

33. <https://www.wcia.com/news/state-news/illinois-to-receive-more-than-250-million-for-broadband-expansion/>

34. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25846.html>

35. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26567.html#:~:text=The%20increase%20to%20MAP%20funding%20by%20%24100%20million,the%20state%20close%20to%20its%20MAP%20funding%20goal.>

36. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.25766.html>



Pillar 5: Support Trusted Community Based Providers to Serve the Needs of those In Deep Poverty

Support our Caregiving Workforce

Provide Community-Based Providers with Consistent and Equitable Access to State Funding

State Actions

Support our Caregiving Workforce

In May of 2022, Governor Pritzker signed HB246 that will improve care for nursing home residents across Illinois.³⁷ The legislation will increase funding that is tied to staffing levels, a proven predictor of improved health outcomes for residents; a new pay scale for certified nursing assistants that increases wages based on years of experience; and funding connected to improving key quality measures.

COVID-19 disproportionately affected nursing homes in vulnerable, often Black and Brown communities. These nursing homes are also more likely to be understaffed. Illinois will invest more than \$700 million in Medicaid funding in the nursing home industry through a combination of new revenues generated by simplifying and expanding the existing nursing home assessment tax, and by allocating additional general revenue funds.

In November of 2022, The Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity made 60 grant awards to human service providers for capital improvement projects. These grants are open to not-for-profit organizations in good standing to operate in Illinois that have provided services for a minimum of two years directly to low-income or marginalized populations in one of the core divisions of DHS— Mental Health, Rehabilitation Services, Substance Use Prevention and Recovery, Family and Community Services, Developmental Disabilities, and Early Childhood.

Provide Community-Based Providers with Consistent and Equitable Access to State Funding

The Governor’s FY24 budget includes rate increases for key community-based providers including³⁸:

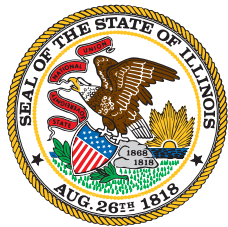
- A 10% increase for Early Intervention providers
- A rate increase for home workers who assist the elderly
- A rate increase for Child Care Assistance Program providers

In addition, the Medicaid Omnibus bill, passed in 2023, includes \$317 million in Medicaid rate increases for behavioral health, substance use disorder, and other providers and services.³⁹

37. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.24981.html>

38. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.26561.html>

39. <https://ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=1298&GAID=17&GA=103&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=145577&SessionID=112>



IDHS
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT
OF HUMAN SERVICES