# Pritzker Administration Launches the Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security to Address Inequality and Poverty Across the State

Press Release - Monday, December 07, 2020

**Chicago, IL** —Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) today announced the Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security. The Commission, which was signed into law by Governor Pritzker earlier this year as part of the Intergenerational Poverty Act (IPA), builds on the administration's efforts to improve the lives of low- and middle-income Illinoisans. The Commission is tasked with developing and adopting a strategic plan that will develop anti-poverty programs that ensure long-term, multigenerational economic mobility regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation or identity, ability, or geographic location. The plan will be available in spring 2021.

Goals for The Commission outlined in state statute include reducing poverty in Illinois by 50% by 2026, eliminating child poverty by 2031 and eliminating all poverty by 2036. IDHS will work closely with The Commission in the coming years to assist in reaching these goals.

"No Illinoisan should have to worry about having a safe place to live or where their next meal is coming from. Unfortunately, that is currently a reality for too many people in our state, a reality that has been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "In the coming years, the newly launched Commission will do the critical work of examining what poverty looks like in Illinois and developing a roadmap that will allow all Illinoisans to live a good life, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or the community they call home."

The launch of this Commission comes at a crucial time as the state faces an unprecedented health and economic crisis caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the virus, it is estimated that 1 in 3 Black and Hispanic individuals are projected to live in poverty.

"The COVID crisis has revealed economic inequity and injustice that has existed within the state for a long time. Before the pandemic, we know that 1.6 million Illinoisans lived in poverty, with 739,000 living in deep poverty. This is inexcusable, and we must address this by ending systems that perpetuate this intergenerational cycle," **said Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Grace B. Hou.**

The Commission, which is set to meet twice a year, is made up of 25 members: four members of the State General Assembly; one member of the judiciary; and twenty public leaders who represent key constituencies that are impacted by poverty. Members were appointed by Governor J.B. Pritzker,

Senate President Don Harmon, Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan, Senate Minority Leader Bill Brady, House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, and Chief Justice Anne M. Burke of the Illinois Supreme Court. The Commission is Co-Chaired by Evelyn Diaz, President of Heartland Alliance, and Amy Susan Brown, Chief Executive Officer of CRIS Healthy-Aging Center and Mass Transit.

"It is exciting to work alongside leading service system decision makers who are clearly defining the causes of intergenerational poverty amongst people in Illinois. This Commission will implement up-to-date research strategies and bravely change the current design of public service systems in order to ensure that Illinois residents are financially independent and free from poverty," **said Amy Susan Brown, Commission Co-Chair and Chief Executive Officer of CRIS Healthy-Aging Center and Mass Transit.**

Racism, gender discrimination, and mistreatment of individuals with disabilities is deeply rooted in American culture. The effects of long-standing inequity linger and perpetuate disparities in poverty, housing, criminal justice, and healthcare, among other areas. The Commission's work will be centered in equity and will intentionally confront racist and discriminatory systems that limit economic mobility.

The Commission will be supported by the Interagency Working Group on Poverty and Economic Insecurity that was also created as a part of the IPA. This supportive body is made up of Directors and senior leaders from the following Illinois agencies: Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Labor, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department on Aging, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Corrections, Governor's Office of Management and Budget, Illinois Department of Economic Security, and Illinois Housing Development Authority. The Workgroup is meant to serve as an engine that propels the work of the Commission through thought partnership, policy development, and strategy execution.

"The current pandemic has taught us so much about how we have failed to ensure the livelihood of Black and other marginalized communities, and it still threatens to put many of them in poverty. While it may seem like a tall order to eradicate poverty, we must think beyond the solutions of the past and hold ourselves accountable for reimagining our state's future," **said State Senator Kimberly Lightford (D-4th District).**

"I was raised by a single mom who waited tables to keep a roof over our head. There were many times growing up where my sisters and I struggled. From that experience, I feel Illinois government should be creating opportunities for our residents to improve their circumstances. We should put them in a position to succeed across generations. We need to find the barriers, empower our people, and position Illinois residents for the success that I know they have the potential to attain," **said State Representative Jeff Keicher (R-70th District).**

"It is an honor to serve as a member of the Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security and to be a voice for the people of this state currently confronting the daily realities and challenges of living in poverty," **said State Senator Dale Fowler (R-59th District).** "Sadly, even in the best of times, poverty remains a profoundly serious issue in our state, especially in Southern

Illinois where poverty rates remain high. Now, as we continue to deal with the ongoing consequences of the COVID-19 health crisis and the economic impact of this pandemic, it is more important than ever that we do what we can to help those struggling in our state, create opportunities, and support our job creators. I remain committed to working with my fellow commission members to help create a brighter future for the people of Illinois."

In addition to developing and adopting a strategic plan, the Commission will hold at least 6 public hearings in different geographic regions of the State to collect information, take testimony, and solicit input from interested parties, including members of the public who have personal experiences with State programs and services.

The Commission, in partnership with Illinois State agencies, met on December 2 will address the multitude of systems and institutions in our state that perpetuate economic inequality by investing in strategies that bring vitality to communities and developing pathways for all Illinois residents to achieve economic security for generations to come. For more information about the Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security, email **dana.kelly@illinois.gov**.

| **Member** |
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| Senator Kimberly A. Lightford |
| Senator Dale Fowler |
| Representative Lamont J. Robinson, Jr. |
| Representative Jeff Keicher |
| Honorable Joy V. Cunningham<br>Appellate Court Justice, 1st Judicial District |
| Evelyn Diaz - Co Chair<br>President<br>Heartland Alliance |
| Amy Susan Brown - Co-Chair<br>Chief Executive Officer<br>CRIS Healthy-Aging Center and Mass Transit |
| Channyn Lynne Parker<br>Howard Brown Health<br>Director of Strategic Partnerships and Executive Leadership |
| Angela Curran, JD, LLM<br>President & CEO<br>Pillars Community Health |
| Andy Kulczycki<br>Executive Director<br>Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County |
| Audra Wilson |

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| President and CEO<br>Shriver Center on Poverty Law |
| Lisa Stanley<br>Decatur Township Supervisor |
| Kate Maehr<br>Executive Director and CEO<br>Greater Chicago Food Depository |
| Colonel Dave Leckrone<br>U.S. Army (Retired)<br>President and CEO<br>Leckrone Military Consulting, LLC. |
| Dr. Charles A. Montorio - Archer, ESQ., MPA<br>President and CEO<br>One Hope United |
| Juan Manuel Calderón<br>Chief Operating Officer<br>The Puerto Rican Cultural Center |
| Jennifer Groce<br>Director of Community Promotion<br>Northern Illinois University |
| Kenneth D. Grunke<br>Executive Director<br>PLOWS Council on Aging |
| Beth Menz<br>Vice President and Home Care Director<br>SEIU Healthcare Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas |
| Al Llorens<br>Vice President<br>Board of Directors<br>Illinois Education Association |
| Pam Davidson<br>Knox County Board Chairwoman |
| Daniel Lurie<br>Chief of Policy<br>City of Chicago |

* There are three seats on the Commission that remain to be filled.

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