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Pritzker Administration Announces $30 Million in Funding for Welcoming Centers to Support Underserved Communities Amidst Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

$30 Million in CURES Funding to Provide Housing Support, Utility Assistance, and Other Services for Immigrants and Refugees Impacted by COVID-19

Elgin, IL — Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced $30 million in CURES funding has been allocated to welcoming centers across Illinois to support the state's most vulnerable communities facing challenges as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. $18 million in funding will go towards housing and utility assistance for families in need, $4.5 million will be used to support employment and job training services and $4 million in funding will be used to provide healthcare education. The remaining $2 million will go towards a multilingual effort to reach Illinois residents eligible to receive support and $1.5 million will be used for technical assistance.

"Our Welcoming Centers play a vital role in our pandemic response and so much more. In fact, places like Centro de Información and the Spanish Community Center have been on the ground monitoring inequities in healthcare and alerting my administration to the needs of immigrant communities, especially in this time of need. Attention to marginalized groups continues to anchor my administration's response to this pandemic. I want to emphasize that COVID-19 testing and treatment is free to all residents of Illinoisans, regardless of insurance or citizenship status," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "With the help of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, we gave $20 million worth of direct cash assistance to residents who weren't eligible for the federal government's stimulus program. Undocumented immigrants contribute billions of dollars in state and local taxes, and Illinois is proud to help more of our residents access the helping hand they deserve in this trying time. In fact, that application period doesn't close until the 19th, so visit www.icirr.org/covidil (http://www.icirr.org/covidil) to apply."

In addition to $30 million in CURES funding, IDHS received $30 million in the fiscal year 2021 budget for immigrant-related support services including $10 million to connect immigrants with critical services and citizenship support and $20 million for cash assistance for Illinoisans ineligible for the federal pandemic stimulus.

To be eligible for the cash assistance program, applicants must be an Illinois resident and experienced a financial hardship due to the current health crisis. Priority will be given to residents that are not eligible for any federal stimulus, unemployment insurance, or pub[illegible] have until October 19, 2020 to apply for cash assistan[illegible] (http://www.icirr.org/covidil) or text "COVI[illegible]

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“Governor Pritzker’s strong leadership allows IDHS’s Welcoming Center Housing and Utility Assistance Project to provide temporary and emergency housing and utility assistance to immigrants, refugees and Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals who have experienced a COVID-19 related financial hardship,” **said Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Grace Hou.** I am humbled by the care for our immigrant and refugee people we serve.”

“As a premier welcoming center site in Illinois, this is an honor to help to provide services to the Elgin community. We are thrilled to welcome Governor Pritzker today, and work together to provide these essential services to the community,” **said Jaime D. Garcia, Executive Director, Centro de Información de Elgin.**

“The Illinois Welcoming Centers have built trust with the community over several years of quality service and localized, culturally competent care. The State of Illinois is demonstrating strong leadership and equitable commitment by supporting us in uplifting the immigrant community at a time of dire need,” **said Veronica Gloria, Executive Director, Spanish Community Center.**

Immigrant and refugee support services are available at seventeen welcoming centers across the state. The Illinois Welcoming Center's innovative model eliminates systemic barriers that immigrants may have in approaching state services. The goal of IWC's is to strengthen the overall human service delivery system for immigrants and refugees and build the capacity of immigrant and refugee communities.

“These Welcoming Centers will be an invaluable resource for immigrants in our area who may be having difficulties navigating through the many, sometimes complex, services that our state provides,” **said State Senator Cristina Castro (D-Elgin).** “This would be true even in a general sense, but during a global health pandemic that has been shown to disproportionately impact communities of color, it could literally mean the difference between life and death.”

“Immigrant communities have been hard hit by the pandemic and organizations like Centro de Información have never been more important in providing a life-line to so many families in the 43rd District and the region. The resources provided by the CARES Act are essential to ensuring that Centro can provide housing and utility assistance, employment and training support and health navigation to those who have been so dramatically impacted by this national health crisis,” **said State Representative Anna Moeller (D-Elgin).** “I am proud to work with members of the General Assembly and Governor Pritzker to ensure that our community is supported during this critical time.”

For more information about immigrant and refugee support services, visit www.dhs.illinois.gov/welcome (http://www.dhs.illinois.gov/welcome), email DHS.BRIS@illinois.gov (mailto:DHS.BRIS@illinois.gov), or call 312-793-7120.

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