Pritzker Administration Launches Outreach Campaign to Support the State's Latinx and Immigrant Communities and announce 14 new Welcoming Centers across Illinois Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

Press Release - Thursday, December 03, 2020

Chicago, IL — Building on Governor JB Pritzker's commitment to stop the spread of COVID-19, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) today announced the launch of a statewide outreach campaign to Latinx and immigrant communities facing disproportionately high COVID-19 positivity rates. The campaign communicates in Spanish and 16 other languages through a variety of ways to help empower community members to protect their health and that of their family members.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, we are seeing that our Latinx and immigrant communities are disproportionately suffering, and it's a priority for my administration to make sure we're doing everything we can to share the most accurate and updated information so individuals can protect themselves, their families and their communities," **said Governor JB Pritzker.**

"We operate with an equity lens. This means that we need to build and design prevention and intervention efforts that are most effective for those communities most impacted by the pandemic," **said Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Grace Hou.** "I am proud to be on a diverse team dedicated to serving all of its residents."

The Latinx community has a positivity rate of more than 20%, nearly double the positivity rate among all other races and ethnicities, and accounts for 21% of positive cases in the state.

"Testing and prevention for COVID-19 is critical to understanding how this virus spreads through our communities. We have to work together to prevent and protect our health and keep our health care systems from being overwhelmed. There are resources available for the most vulnerable, and I encourage everyone to follow the guidance set forth by the IDPH. I am pleased to see this campaign come to life and reach Latino communities and immigrants and refugees," **said Representative Lisa Hernandez, (D-Cicero).**

"It's clear that COVID-19 cases are on the rise in our community and across the country. This campaign is an opportunity to call on Latinos to continue to do their part to prevent the spread:

Wash your hands, watch your space, and wear your mask," **said Senator Omar Aquino (D-Chicago).**

"I'm so grateful for this much-needed effort. Our communities need high-quality, culturally appropriate information so that they can make smart, informed decisions about their health and the health of their families. We can only win this battle with Covid-19 if we equip our community members with the information they need," **said Representative Theresa Mah (D-Chicago).**

"With the rise in the number of Coronavirus cases in the Latinx and Black communities, I applaud Gov. Pritzker for taking extra action to protect Illinois' residents. I am confident that under the leadership of Secretary Grace Hou, the IDHS is well prepared to enhance the messaging to slow the spread of COVID-19 and help save lives during the Pandemic," **said Representative LaShawn K. Ford (D-Chicago).**

The campaign aims to break the barriers that keep immigrants and refugees from moving forward with prevention, and advises these communities on the best ways to prevent COVID as the State re-entered Phase 3.
The campaign will:

- Empower employees to protect their health in the workplace so they can protect their families' health at home
- Combat the stigma around the virus in immigrant and refugee communities
- Remind community members to limit holiday gatherings and ceremonies

The campaign provides community members with guidance about the symptoms of COVID-19, social distancing, PPE use, free testing sites, how to stop the spread of germs, what to do if you're sick, how to protect from COVID-19, how to manage COVID-19 symptoms at home, and how to care for sick family members in multi-generational households.

Direct outreach to communities greatly impacted by COVID-19 is key to the campaign and includes coordination with community organizations, elected officials, places of worship, schools and food pantries to distribute Family Protection Packs that include face masks, hand sanitizers, hand wipes and educational resources.

In addition to direct community outreach, the administration continues to work with local health departments on contact tracing which is critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19. The state's contact tracing program relies on trained public health workers who answer questions, alleviate concerns, and provide resources to ensure Illinoisans who either test positive or have been in contact with someone who tested positive have access to the resources and information they need. Contact tracers make calls in both English and Spanish. To make it easier for Illinois residents to identify when a contact tracer is attempting to get in contact with them, all calls made by contact tracers have the caller ID "IL COVID HELP."

Additionally, 14 new Welcoming Centers across the state have received funding to provide immigrant and refugee support services bringing the total number of Welcoming Centers operating in Illinois to 30. The Illinois Welcoming Center (IWC) is a comprehensive service center for the integration of

immigrants and refugees in Illinois. The Illinois Welcoming Center's innovative model eliminates systematic barriers that immigrants may have in approaching state services and empower immigrant communities to succeed. For more information about immigrant and refugee support services, visit **www.coronavirus.illinois.gov** or call 312-793-7120.

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