

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor of the State of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch
Speaker of the House
Illinois House of Representatives
300 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Don Harmon
Senate President
Illinois Senate
327 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Jim Durkin
Minority Leader
Illinois House of Representatives
220N Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Dan McConchie
Senate Minority Leader
Illinois Senate
309H State Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

May 14, 2021

Dear Governor Pritzker, Speaker Welch,
President Harmon, Leader Durkin, Leader McConchie:

The undersigned organizations write to ask for your commitment to the funding requests outlined below, which would utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Illinois continues to move swiftly to becoming a more racially and economically equitable state. We must now use ARP dollars to continue that progress. The State acted swiftly last year to make important equity investments through state fiscal relief dollars provided in the CARES Act. These funds prevented evictions; these funds allowed people to pay their bills; these funds supported immigrant families; and these funds helped ensure that individuals and families most in need received healthcare. In short, these funds built on our existing state safety net and helped to significantly mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Creative and impactful work was accomplished, even in a political environment where the federal Administration discouraged it.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed and the Governor signed an agenda to make significant progress towards advancing equity in our state's economy, in healthcare, in education, and in the criminal legal system. Every Illinoisan will see a positive impact from these new laws. Still, new programs must still be funded.

It is time for us to do more. Inequities have remained in place for generations, fixing them requires public policy to explicitly focus on systems reforms that benefit people who have historically borne the burden of racial discrimination. With our state's annual budget continuing to operate at a structural deficit, we must be creative in looking for other opportunities to invest in the Illinoisans who have suffered the most in the pandemic to enable their full recovery.

We write today to urge that a significant portion of Illinois state fiscal relief funds received through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) be dedicated to meeting the needs of Illinois residents most dramatically impacted by the pandemic and least served through other specific programs created by, or infused with, funding from the ARP.

Our specific focus is on the Black and Latinx communities, immigrant families, rural communities, returning citizens, and the lowest income earners who receive public assistance.

We recognize the acute needs of people who lost employment but were ineligible for unemployment due to no fault of their own, and low- to moderate-income people who remained working in frontline jobs during the pandemic.

We have a new opportunity to be effective with ARP funds. This time, the federal Administration has wholeheartedly embraced innovative uses of funds to help people in need. The legislation states that several of the purposes for which funds can be used are to “respond to the public health emergency and its impact on people or offset the pandemic’s negative economic effects.” While there are many ways to meet these goals, we are focused on one: **providing cash assistance to people most in need of it.**

We offer the following proposals to ensure that everyone living in Illinois can succeed and thrive as we remedy inequities made worse by the pandemic and move closer to a strong future. During these challenging times, our ability to care for those with the fewest resources is the standard against which Illinois will be measured.

We propose investing ARP money in the following areas:

\$100 million to provide cash assistance for undocumented immigrants, administered through trusted community partners (expands a program funded last year at \$20 million, which was oversubscribed within just a few days; payments could be recurring)

\$1400 per tax filing household to provide cash assistance to all immigrant families with Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) filers who qualified for EIP payments but were not eligible. These payments could be delivered directly by the Illinois Department of Revenue.

Eligible Qualifying Population: 110,000 Total Cost: \$154 million

\$2,400 cash payments to TANF recipients and zero income SNAP recipients.

Eligible Qualifying Population: 98,009 Total Cost: \$235 million
(represents 1 month of wages @ \$15/hr)

\$2,400 cash payments to SSI recipients.

Eligible Qualifying Population: 264,282 Total Cost: \$634 million
(represents 1 month of wages @ \$15/hr)

\$2,400 cash payments for individuals who have been released from Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) custody since the start of the pandemic.

Eligible Qualifying Population: 23,500 Total Cost: \$56 million
(represents 1 month of wages @ \$15/hr)

\$100 million for a fund that would provide \$2,400 to workers who have lost employment during the pandemic and could not qualify for unemployment insurance (UI) or Pandemic Unemployment Insurance (PUA)

\$100 million to fund premium pay for frontline workers earning no more than \$75,000 per year who have risked their health and safety to provide vital services during the pandemic.

We also recognize that ARP is providing significant funding for housing assistance and access to health care, and also making many individuals eligible for EIP's and tax credits. The State of Illinois should mount a vigorous outreach program to ensure that anyone who is eligible for this assistance, particularly those receiving aid through the programs outlined above, is connected with all assistance programs for which they may qualify.

ARP further offers the chance to ensure that the four pillars of the Black Caucus agenda are properly funded, that all families come out of the pandemic with financial security and that our broken mental health system is fixed. We support proposals that would advance these goals.

We look forward to working with you to chart the next steps forward in providing Illinoisans with the cash and other support they need to recover from the pandemic. To discuss the ideas presented by our coalition, please reach out to Jeremy Rosen from the Shriver Center on Poverty Law at jeremyrosen@povertylaw.org and Harish I. Patel from Economic Security for Illinois at harish@economicsecurityil.org.

Respectfully submitted:

Action Now
Brighton Park Neighborhood Association
Children's Home & Aid
The Chicago Community Trust
Chicago Jobs Council
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
Economic Security for Illinois
Equity and Transformation
Grassroots Collaborative
Heartland Alliance
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Families for Public Schools
Latino Policy Forum
Legal Action Chicago
LIFT, Inc
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
One Northside
POWER-PAC IL
Raise The Floor Alliance
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Uptogether
Workers Center for Racial Justice
Young Invincibles