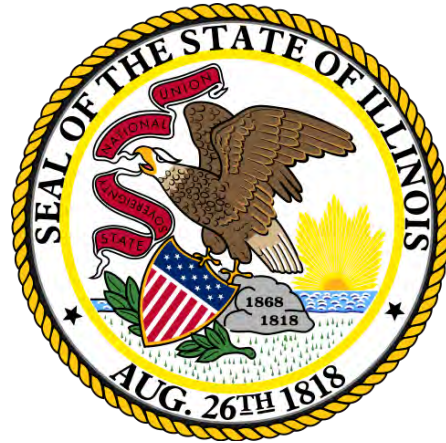


January 2023



# OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

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ALEXI GIANNOULIAS • SECRETARY OF STATE

Transition Report  
*Blueprint for Secretary of State's Office*



### A word from Alexi



As we stand here in the beginning days of 2023, I could not be more hopeful and excited for what the year – and future – holds for our great state. I am profoundly honored and humbled to have your confidence to serve as Illinois' 38<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State and look forward with renewed energy to make government work better for everyone. And everyone means everyone, regardless of age, race, geography, socioeconomic status, or ability.

I want to recognize and thank outgoing Secretary Jesse White, who has built an incredible legacy over his 24 years in the office and will continue to be an inspiration for all of us with his dedication to public service. And I want to thank you, the people of Illinois. One of my principal areas of focus as I take office will be on strengthening public trust. The people of Illinois trust us with a lot – your tax dollars, your laws, your protection, and your family's lives. As I pledged during my campaign, **I promise to earn that trust every day as the Secretary of State.** Part of that trust involves improving the lives of the underserved and fighting for those who don't feel they have a voice.

We've already gotten started. In the days after the November election, we have held dozens of meetings with leaders across the state, read through hundreds of public comments, and responded to constituent calls and emails to hear your good ideas. Our hope is that you will see these ideas featured in my plan for the office, and in some of the immediate steps we will be taking over our first 100 days. Our promise is to continue to engage all Illinoisans in open collaboration as we transition in and ensure that our office has the infrastructure, resources, and public will to better support you.

When I was State Treasurer, on my first day in office, I implemented the most wide-ranging, comprehensive ethics package in state government. I have already started on that journey in my new role as the Secretary of State. Transparency in all we do is one of my most fundamental commitments, as is reshaping the way our office delivers services to the people of Illinois. We will work hard to eliminate the "time tax" that too many of you are paying every day just to access simple government services. We will be taking steps to modernize our office and make Illinois a leader in access and sustainability – from making it easier to update driver information to expanding voter participation, from championing environmental initiatives to increasing minority participation in small business formation and in organ and tissue donation.

As we undertake this transition, I want you to know that my team will work side-by-side with you to enact our common vision. While we can't promise to get it right every time, we are committed to partnering with you on this journey. Together, we will usher in a new era of transparency, openness, and accountability.

I'm rolling up my sleeves. Join me as we RevUp IL!

Let's go!

*Alexi*



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# **Executive Summary: Vision and Commitments**

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## Executive Summary

### Vision

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“I want to build on Secretary Jesse White’s incredible legacy of public service, and together we can make government work better for everyone now while building a brighter future for generations to come.”

~Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias

In the days after the November election, our Transition Team held dozens of meetings with leaders across the state, read through hundreds of public comments that came through the RevUp Illinois website, and responded to numerous constituent calls and emails to hear Illinoisans’ feedback.

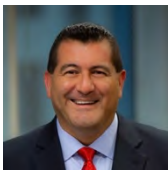
We thank our **Transition Team Chairpeople** for their energy, commitment, and vision to our state and to cause:



**Cheri Bustos**, Moline, Illinois Congresswoman – Illinois’ 17th Congressional District

Cheri, serving her fifth term in Congress, is a member of the Democratic House Leadership team. In 2018, she was elected Chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and secured party control of the U.S. House in 2020.

Cheri has also served on the powerful House Appropriations Committee and is an influential member of the House Agriculture Committee, chairing a subcommittee. She is a founding member of Elect Democratic Women. Born in Springfield, Cheri began her professional career as a journalist working in the Quad Cities.



**Martin Cabrera**, Chicago, CEO/Founder of Cabrera Capital Markets and Cabrera Capital Partners

Martin is the founder and CEO of Cabrera Capital Markets – one of the largest Latino-owned investment firms in the U.S., which provides global investment banking, institutional brokerage, and real estate development services to a substantial and diversified client base that includes financial institutions, states and municipalities, corporations, unions, foundations, and endowments. Martin also served as chair of the Chicago Plan Commission for seven years. Last year, Crain’s Chicago Business named him on its Chicago Power 25 List.



**Stephanie Neely**, Chicago, Managing Director, Head, J.P. Morgan Asset Management North America Institutional Central and Canada

Stephanie leads the North America Institutional Central U.S. and Canada team at J.P. Morgan Asset Management. She is also a member of the North America Institutional management team and the Asset Management CEO's Black Employees Roundtable and she worked on improving the DEI data transparency and disclosure. Before that, Stephanie served as vice president and assistant treasurer at Allstate. In 2006, she was elected Chicago City Treasurer where she served two terms.



**Edward M. Smith**, Carbondale, CEO/President of ULLICO, Inc., and former leader of the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)

Ed is CEO and President of ULLICO, Inc. (Union Labor Life Insurance Company) based in Washington, DC. He previously served as Vice President and Regional Manager of the Laborers' International Union of North America. Ed is the former Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Investment and served as a member of the Democratic National Committee.

We also thank the 122 dedicated members of our nine Transition Team Committees, representing a wide range of voices and constituents across the state and reflecting all the supports and services housed under the Secretary of State's Office:

- **Driver Services Facilities and Road Safety:** The Secretary of State's Office manages vehicle registrations (license plates, titles) and state IDs, and driver's licenses through physical facilities and online services.
- **Ethics and Office Policies:** The office maintains lobbyist registrations and statements of economic interest, commonly known as ethics statements, as well as its office policies for employees.
- **Library Enhancements:** The Secretary of State serves as Chief Librarian, with purview over library facilities and digital services.
- **Securities Division:** The Illinois Securities Department regulates the offer and sale of securities, conducts audits, investigates complaints and participates in prosecution, and educates investors and schools on financial literacy.
- **Voter Rights and Registration:** The Secretary of State is the custodian of the State's Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) system and advances initiatives that expand voter rights.
- **Business Services:** The Business Services Division serves as a central hub for forming new businesses and organizations, as well as submitting and accessing information on all types of businesses and organizations registered in Illinois.



- **Organ and Tissue Donations:** The Secretary of State's Office maintains the Organ and Tissue Donor Registry, including the registration through driver's license applications for the state of Illinois.

**Technology Enhancements** reflect the critical role technology plays in enabling all the supports and services offered by the office. Technology can help improve the customer experience for the public as it engages with our office and the service experience for our employees as they perform their important responsibilities.

**Environmental Initiatives** are an important new priority for the Secretary of State's Office, with a commitment to lead on initiatives that encourage statewide changes and propel Illinois into a position of Green excellence.

We share this feedback with you here, in transparency. We bring forward challenges the public has faced in accessing and engaging with these supports and services, as well as opportunities to create a better customer experience, expand what we offer, and provide greater accessibility to our facilities and engagement points. These changes will improve the lives of Illinoisans.



## What we heard from you

### Ethics and good government

“

**Restore trust** in government: *“I’d like to see more accountability in Illinois government.” “Walk the walk, not just talk the talk.”*

Ensure **more transparency and accountability** for public officials: *“There are inconsistencies that need to be addressed.” “Take criminal complaints against major corporations seriously.”*

**Engage community** members more **regularly**: *“I’d like to see politicians here to... show us that they are no different than the citizens they represent.”*

The people of Illinois trust the government with tax dollars, laws, protection, and family lives. However, political scandals and turmoil have led to a “corruption tax,” undermining trust in Illinois’ government over the years. Last decade, a Gallup poll indicated only one in four Illinois residents were confident in their state government, the lowest in the country.

We heard you are looking for more transparency, opportunities to share your voice, and for a restoration of accountability for government officials. You are seeking clear guidelines and procedural limits with respect to lobbying, campaign contributions, conflict(s) of interest, and economic interest disclosures. You have called for more visibility into government commitments and progress, such as through published annual reports that measure and report on the Office’s performance. And you want continued public engagement in the governmental process, be it through opportunities to share feedback online, town halls that allow you to ask questions of government leaders, and site visits that allow leaders to “walk a mile in employees’ shoes” and identify areas of celebration and improvement.

We know that demonstrating both our commitment and our progress is critical to enhancing public trust.





## Customer centricity and modernization

“

**Upgrade technology and modernize** outdated systems, equipment, and processes: *"We are in desperate need of technological upgrades." "Many of the services that one needs to go into a DMV or other license plate services should be able to be done virtually."*

**Ensure that government facilities are more accessible and welcoming to all Illinoisans:** *"Given the importance of the Secretary of State's Office in so many aspects of day-to-day-life, it is critical that Illinois residents of all backgrounds and languages can easily access our online portals."*

**Develop government services and solutions that are cohesive, clear, and connected:** *"We need to constantly evolve to improve customer experience and think of [Secretary of State sites] as retail facilities."*

**Create streamlined and consistent experiences at all our locations:** *"Satellite offices should offer the same services as regular driver facilities." "Please coordinate across departments to offer services everywhere people go."*

When the people of Illinois interact with our Office, they develop immediate perceptions of their experience. Were they greeted with a warm welcome? Were they able to get their questions answered? Was the process quick and efficient? Was accessing the service – physically or virtually – easy to do? For too many Illinoisans, the answer to these questions has been a “no.”

We heard your accounts of long wait times and different standards of service across driver services facilities, leading to a significant “time tax” on citizens seeking to renew their licenses or obtain a Real ID. We appreciate the burden this puts on all of you, especially on our seniors, non-English Language Speakers, and accessibility-challenged populations.

We heard that you value libraries and see them as community anchors, but that a million Illinois residents today still have no access to library resources or basic information needs – let alone other connection points to services the Secretary of State’s Office provides.

We heard that you welcome information, but that it can be hard to find, be it guidelines on how to register to vote or how to file paperwork to keep a small business or nonprofit in compliance.

None of this can happen without modernization of our delivery: using leading-edge technology to help customers to perform more functions online (think scheduling appointments, submitting business filings, applying for jobs, verifying documents) *and* equipping our dedicated office staff with the tools and training to provide exceptional service more easily in person.

A first step will be to work with Illinoisans to understand what a great “21st-century” customer experience should look like – and then to pilot different initiatives, quickly. We plan to make the Office a leading national example of an accessible, supportive, and easy government experience.



## Public education and awareness

“

**Give the public a voice** and an opportunity to **provide input**: *“Host business round tables.” “Have a suggestion box, or something like feedback surveys after customer service interactions.”*

**Improve awareness** with respect to information, sites and facilities, and services: *“Access to information is where it all starts. We can't encourage people to register or vote if they don't know where to go or how to get there.” “Update the website to have current and correct information. There are a lot of conflicting statements on the site.”*

A healthy and thriving society requires active citizen participation in areas such as public health, the environment, and the economy. Examples of citizen action include supporting organ donation, adopting more sustainable and earth-friendly practices, and launching small businesses that meet important community needs. What often makes this difficult in practice is a lack of awareness of why to engage and how to do it.

We heard that you aren't always “in the know” on important priorities like election cycles or civic engagement opportunities. You don't have full visibility into how **you** can contribute to positive social outcomes: how taking immediate steps to reduce distracted driving can significantly lower road fatalities, or how composting food waste can reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

You also don't have a full appreciation of the services, resources, and civic activities available to you, nor do you feel like you have a voice in making them more user-friendly. You want more opportunities to hear from our office and, in turn, to share your thoughts and perspectives with us, both in writing and in person.

Transparent public education and feedback are crucial to our success as a state, and we are eager to step up our efforts to connect you to services, create needed change, and be a trusted partner and convener on your behalf.



## Workforce enablement

“

**Foster an office staff committed** to the mission and the work: *"I am super excited for the future of the office. We need pay that is just and fair for the increased workload that we are doing, and transparent leadership that will continue the motto of 'customer service above all.'"*

Process **technological upgrades** to support staff in their day-to-day activities: *"Employees are doing everything manually and can't keep up with demand... we need technology to be where it should be in 2022."*

**Empower staff to be heard and contribute ideas:** *"We have many ideas and insights to share with you as we move forward." "Talk with employees that are in direct contact with customers and paperwork."*

Our Office can only be as exceptional as the individuals within it. That's why it is our goal to bring the best out of our employees. By investing in our people, we will ensure that our workforce is equipped to serve you – the state of Illinois.

From our staff, we heard excitement around opportunities to strengthen inclusivity, build diverse teams, and create an environment where both employees and our customers feel welcomed and represented. Employees shared a strong desire to be "seen" and engaged, as well as an interest in helping shape the future of the office and see a long-term home for themselves within the Secretary of State's Office.

We also heard accounts about the current state of technology within some of our offices, and the need to make our people's lives better with updated technology, collaboration tools, more flexible working environments, and professional development opportunities.

We know we need to lead by example so that we can help lead our State. We see the importance of re-opening lines of communication with our staff, encouraging ideas, transparency, and collaboration to create change. What works well? What problems do you face? What are the obstacles that lead to frustration? What would help improve day-to-day operations? Let's work on this together.



## Access and environmental sustainability

“

**Access is central** to everything the Secretary of State does, from communications to services: *"Increase hours at locations on consistent, select days to ensure everyone has access to in-person services."*

**Uplift communities and constituent groups** without access to Secretary of State services: *"[The office] needs to be a catalyst to expand access. There are one million Illinois residents without access to library resources or basic information needs."*

**Sustainability efforts** can start with understanding and improving **internal operations to reduce state emissions and waste**: *"The office needs to conduct an energy audit to understand current practices." "How is trash currently being disposed of? Garbage should be disposed of through waste-to-energy plants"*

**Multiply our environmental impact through our interactions and beyond the agency**: *"No other entity communicates with drivers more than the Secretary of State." "Environmental stewardship should be a [performance indicator] in contract selection."*

The people of Illinois deserve a government office that ensures that they have access to services, takes steps to engage them in decision-making processes, and promotes opportunities to preserve everything Illinois has to offer future generations.

We heard that you would like to see the Office lead by example, multiplying our impact beyond the agency. We appreciate the confidence you have placed in us and welcome the opportunity to reevaluate our approach to environmental sustainability – from piloting electric vehicles for our fleet to establishing procurement contracts with environmentally-conscious and minority-owned vendors.

We heard that we need to improve access from the services we offer, to the facilities we manage, to the people that make the Secretary of State's Office the place it is – our staff, leaders, and partners. You have called on us to be more proactive to ensure that digital services are offered in multiple languages and that our communications and documentation reflect the State and its diversity. And you want us to continue to identify ways to make our sites work for you, from access to services, to handicap parking, to hours of operation.

Given the Office's large physical footprint – with a staff of 4,200 employees, 138 driver facilities, oversight of the Capitol Complex, and authority to provide grants to libraries – we believe we are poised to champion access to resources and sustainability, both internally through our office operations and externally through public education and awareness.

Among our priorities is narrowing the digital divide, which is a major barrier for many who need access to government and other critical services. As we modernize the Office's infrastructure and implement a new customer experience, we will ensure Illinoisans can access the services we provide and the civic participation opportunities we promote.



## Our commitments to you

You have given us a lot to consider, and we have reflected on your input thoughtfully. Based on your feedback and the nine committees' findings, we are pleased to make the following seven commitments to the Illinois public – along with how your experience might look different as you engage with the Secretary of State's Office.

### **Commitment #1: We will earn public trust through good government, ethical proceedings, and transparency.**

We will prioritize greater transparency and accountability for public officials to position the Office as a leader in ethics reform. We will "walk the walk" by declaring ethical expectations upfront, being more open with disclosure of activities, relationships, and economic interests in intersectional legislative strategy, and auditing current policies and practices across the Office.

On our first day in office, we issued an Executive Order to set high ethical standards from the start. We have initiated the review of the use of state vehicles to ensure they conform to state business-related functions, strengthened the Secretary of State Policy Manual's sexual harassment policy to remove unnecessary and arbitrary burdens, and codified an official office policy to prohibit employees and contract workers from making political contributions to the Secretary's political fund, in addition to three other actions.

Building on this momentum, we will also bring forward legislative action that enhances the two-year lobbying ban to other levels of government, clarifies the role of consultant lobbyists, and reforms disclosure requirements.

### **Commitment #2: We will make Illinois driver services among the best in the nation by digitizing and simplifying the user experience and partnering to ensure expanded access for all.**

There is a lot to do to make Illinois driver services and facilities among the most customer-centric and accessible in the country and to ensure Illinois roads are safe for all users. While efforts like technology modernization will take time, we know we can make some immediate changes.

In our first weeks, we will lay the groundwork for digital service offerings and improvements – like the Skip-the-Line program and electronic titling – to reduce wait times and make the customer experience easier, faster, and more enjoyable. To do so, we will initiate an internal operations assessment to understand upgrades needed at driver facilities and on behalf of our employees.

On the safety front, we will bring forward legislative action such as banning recording and video conferencing during vehicle operation to reduce distracted driving and improve public well-being.

And we want to continue to hear from you: we will be convening a task force of unions, businesses, and state agencies to review Commercial Driver's License requirements, and anticipate creating more opportunities like this to collaborate across the state and other key stakeholder groups.



**Commitment #3: We will empower all our employees with training, resources, and recognition to make the Illinois Secretary of State Office a top place to work across public agencies.**

We have an incredible staff that is committed to delivering exceptional service to stakeholders across the state, across a range of supports, touchpoints, and locations. We, in turn, are committed to them, to ensure their work is fulfilling, they have the tools and flexibility to do their jobs easily and well, and they feel recognized and rewarded for all they do.

To begin, we will survey our staff to understand what their needs and hopes are, enabling us to take quick action on improvements. We will review our office’s human resources and talent policies to ensure that we continue to attract, develop, and retain a great team, and renew our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEI&A). And we will leverage technology to allow our staff to work more efficiently and effectively, starting with building our understanding of how technology is currently being used to identify potential upgrades to our systems and processes.

**Commitment #4: We will listen to and, more importantly, provide you – our constituents – with more ways to engage and provide feedback.**

We are already in process of developing an engagement strategy for internal and external communications to strengthen the public’s trust. We will be conducting a statewide listening and site visit tour to “live your experience” at driver’s services facilities, libraries, and voter registration sites. And we will be launching regular Town Hall meetings with the Secretary of State leadership to provide updates and opportunities for the public to ask us anything.

Throughout our time in office, we will maintain two-way communication and forums for you to give us feedback and suggest ideas to get better at what we do.

**Commitment #5: We will bring the Secretary of State’s Office to you, wherever you are, by exploring new and innovative ways to offer accessible services across departments.**

The services our office provides help constituents get to their destinations safely, build businesses that drive our economy forward, and save lives through the Organ Tissue Donor Program. We commit to expanding those services and more beyond their physical sites, bringing cross-departmental resources to every Illinoisan, wherever they may be.

You asked us for a more diverse set of on and off-site activities: more pop-up voter registration sites, more organ and tissue donation sign-up locations, and more DMV kiosks. You also wanted a wider array of digital resources like e-books and databases that increase access to information and support important community resources: public, school, and academic libraries.

In the short-term, we will begin an accessibility audit of our facilities to identify where site-specific changes like increased parking for Illinoisans with disabilities or accessibility challenges will occur



and when. And finally, we will engage you, our customers, to help shape this journey every step of the way.

**Commitment #6: We will make the Office a trusted partner and convener on your behalf, working tirelessly to support existing businesses and help expand new ventures within the state of Illinois.**

We have the opportunity – and responsibility – to connect people to resources. Whether those resources are from our office or in the state ecosystem, we will develop a hub for businesses and organizations, their leaders, and aspiring entrepreneurs. We have a wonderful array of opportunities across our state, but we can do more to help you navigate and take advantage of available resources.

To start, we will develop and launch a short video series to orient business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to state resources and requirements. And we will begin to explore collaborations (for example, with the Women's Business Development Center, Chicago Minority Supplier Diversity Development Corporation, Goldman Sachs 10000 Small Business Initiative, and State's Business Enterprise Program) to provide additional opportunities to connect and receive business development support.

Given our reach and at least annual touchpoints with businesses and organizations, we have an open door to engage business owners and communities for input and feedback to drive the change that Illinoisans want, whether it be in supporting minority entrepreneurs or finding ways for businesses to encourage greater sustainability practices, organ and tissue donation sign-up, and voter participation. And in the long-term, together, we will celebrate successful businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs that make our economy stronger.

**Commitment #7: We will lead by example and use the Office's position to serve as a national model for environmental sustainability.**

We are making environmental sustainability a priority and will start our journey on our first days in the Office.

We will be quickly building our understanding of the environmental impact we make as an Office – the fuel, energy, and resource we consume to conduct our operations – by surveying our staff and conducting site visits. This will help us develop sustainability policies to shift purchasing towards environmentally conscious vendors, offer services and recordkeeping online, and explore incentive opportunities to encourage adoption across departments.

As we mature our understanding and define avenues of impact, we commit to sharing our environmental vision statement with you and to leading the way for others to join.



### What will success look like?

Our aspirations for the Office are bold, and we know we won't be able to get there on our own. **Won't you join us to make the Secretary of State's vision of the future a reality?**

- **Driver Services Facilities and Road Safety:** We will make Illinois driver services and facilities among the most customer-centric and accessible in the country and ensure Illinois roads are safe for all users.
- **Ethics and Office Policies:** We will restore the public's trust and redefine public service in Illinois.
- **Library Enhancements:** We will champion access to diverse and inclusive information by equitably distributing library resources, activating collaborative partnerships, and supporting freedom of thought.
- **Securities Division:** We will boldly protect Illinoisans, especially the most vulnerable, from constantly-evolving threats from fraudsters and scammers.
- **Voter Rights and Registration:** We will be the national model for voter access, engagement, and turnout.
- **Business Services:** We will make Illinois an entrepreneurial and business-minded state, with accessible support for all residents.
- **Organ and Tissue Donations:** We will find a match for every Illinoisan who needs one by increasing registered donors, particularly among communities where the largest disparities exist.

Through **Technology Enhancements**, *we will leverage technology to make the provision of services as quick and easy as possible for the constituents of Illinois and the employees of the Secretary of State's Office through simplified, mostly digital experiences.*

And, with a commitment to **Environmental Initiatives**, *we will become one of the most sustainable offices in the country, using our platform to drive innovation and adoption of environmentally friendly practices across the state.*

**Let's Rev Up, Illinois!**





## Overview of Committees and Our Approach

As our new administration settles into the Office, we will be thoughtful and intentional in how we effect change. We intend to build off the great foundation Secretary White established over the last 24 years, using our Transition Committees and you – the public – as a guide.

When we embarked on this process, we asked Transition Committee leaders to do the following:

1. Set a vision and determine what success looks like
2. Identify challenges, opportunities, and/or suggestions for improvement
3. Consider practices and lessons learned from similar initiatives in Illinois and elsewhere
4. Review public comments and incorporate your feedback
5. Generate potential strategies to address challenges and opportunities
6. Identify actions we can take together as we move forward

Given the broad mandate of the Secretary of State's Office, the nine Transition Committees worked hard to identify the top issues for us to address as a new administration. They also incorporated the interesting and innovative ideas from both the public and transition committee members, representing the voice of their stakeholders and communities.

In the following sections, you will find each committee's findings in detail. These sections describe what each committee heard from peers, partners, and the people of Illinois. We hope you are as energized by this thinking as we have been, and invite you to continue to contribute your input as we move forward.



# **Driver Facilities and Road Safety Committee Findings**

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## Driver Facilities and Road Safety Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Driver Facilities and Road Safety** is to make Illinois driver services and facilities among the most customer-centric and accessible in the country. Moreover, we want to ensure that Illinois roads are safe for all users.

If successful, this would mean more accessible service locations, reduced wait times, reduced time per transaction, and increased customer satisfaction through physical and virtual touchpoints, alongside a broader goal of fewer traffic crashes and fatalities for the people of Illinois.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities the Driver Facilities and Road Safety Committee found, and the public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Lack of online/digital service options often lead to long wait times (i.e., time tax) and poor customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Allow citizens to renew licenses fully online!"</li> <li>▪ "Many of the services that one needs to go into a DMV or other license plate services should be able to be done virtually"</li> <li>▪ "Allow appointments to be scheduled online for the DMV for specific dates and times with priority over walk-ins"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to create consistent service offerings and improve retail experiences across all driver facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Great customer service goes a long way"</li> <li>▪ "Satellite offices should offer the same services as regular Secretary of State driver facilities"</li> <li>▪ "We need to constantly evolve to improve customer experience and think of Secretary of State as retail facilities"</li> <li>▪ "Helpful to look at what's working in other contexts, like retail, and apply it to Secretary of State facilities"</li> </ul>
Desire to streamline licensing processes, harmonize training, and clarify unlicensed vehicle regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Is it possible to relook at the state's program for work driving permits?"</li> <li>▪ "Continue the easy transfer of out-of-state Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDLs)"</li> <li>▪ "Is there a way to improve the time it takes for school bus drivers to become licensed?"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to increase equity and access for underserved populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Lack of ADA-compliant Driver's License Facilities"</li> <li>▪ "Please consider implementing an online option or invite feedback from registrants and caregivers on how to accommodate individuals' specific needs during the renewal process"</li> <li>▪ "Driver’s facilities need to have significant improvement in multilingual service"</li> </ul>



Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Register individuals with developmental disabilities by expanding the current mobile unit"</li> </ul>
<p>Need to consider impacts of transportation trends on future landscape and how to mitigate downside risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Need to figure out vehicle miles tax versus motor fuel tax to fund transportation"</li> <li>▪ "With shift to electric vehicles (EVs) and lower motor fuel tax, need to think about other funding mechanisms"</li> <li>▪ "Class 3 or higher autonomous vehicles should be banned in 3 areas for safety concerns: school zones, construction zones, and highly populated areas"</li> </ul>
<p>Desire to reduce traffic crashes/fatalities and make roads safer for all users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "I have the right as a lawful pedestrian to walk safely on foot"</li> <li>▪ "The number of pedestrian and cyclist deaths has been growing steadily for years, and only pedestrian and cyclist-first infrastructure will remedy the problem"</li> <li>▪ "We need to monitor and ticket electric and motorized bicycle and scooter riders for traffic infractions, not stopping at stop signs, red lights, and riding on the sidewalks"</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Driver Facilities and Road Safety Committee included:

- Use technology that shifts customers to online/digital services to reduce wait times and increase satisfaction
- Expand satellite office service offerings and revamp facilities to improve customer experience
- Improve availability of licensing/training programs and provide legal clarity on non-licensed vehicles
- Invest in tools to improve equitable service and leverage the Secretary of State's footprint to increase access to services
- Incentivize electric vehicles and study ways to properly fund transportation infrastructure and public transit
- Advocate for and pass large package of road safety measures to reduce fatalities and improve safety

To address these opportunities, the **Driver Facilities and Road Safety Committee** proposes the following potential strategies and short- and long-term actions to take.



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Use technology that shifts customers to online/digital services to reduce wait times and increase satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin a process to enable online scheduling for driver licensing and vehicle registration (Skip-the-Line)</li> <li>Scope launch of early pilot program for online service, dependent on feasibility, impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combine driver licensing and vehicle registration into a single process / system</li> <li>Implement digital driver's licenses, CDLs, license plates, and electronic vehicle registrations and insurance reporting</li> <li>Enable document upload and document approval capabilities to streamline licensing process</li> <li>Develop roadmap for longer-term modernization of underlying IT systems that will enable future online/digital services</li> </ul>
Expand satellite office service offerings and revamp facilities to improve customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate internal operations assessment to understand services provided, upgrades needed at each facility</li> <li>Initiate security review at driver facilities given cash transactions and other security challenges (e.g., angry customers, crime, and unreliable police response)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renovate existing driver facilities to provide modern and consistent retail feel and improved customer experience</li> <li>Ensure accessible parking and seating for seniors and people with disabilities</li> <li>Add EV charging stations, iPads, and other technology enablers to drive improvements and efficiencies</li> <li>Create consistent service offerings across all Secretary of State driver facilities (e.g., increase services offered at satellite Secretary of State facilities to match services offered at other locations)</li> <li>Expand hours and make them consistent to improve accessibility</li> <li>Hire security guards to ensure customer and employee safety</li> </ul>
Improve availability of licensing/training programs and provide legal clarity on non-licensed vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate working groups of unions, businesses, state agencies to assess impacts of CDL requirements and recommendations</li> <li>Pass legislation granting non-home rule municipalities authority to regulate unlicensed vehicles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create partnerships with community colleges, high schools, and driving schools to increase available training programs and driving test options</li> <li>Create option for remote CDL training and written exams to ease the burden of obtaining or renewing license</li> <li>Credit out-of-state training hours for first-time CDL applicants in IL or enable the ability to transfer license into IL with proper testing</li> <li>Market training programs and provide financial support for people to participate</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend cooperative testing pilot program for schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in programs to increase supply of CDL drivers</li> <li>Review state commercial driving requirements and identify opportunities to streamline/align with federal requirements</li> </ul>
Invest in tools to improve equitable service and leverage Secretary of State footprint to increase access to services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Dept of Corrections to provide state IDs for formerly incarcerated individuals</li> <li>Improve multilingual services; enable language processing, QR codes, virtual assistants, and other tools to make Secretary of State services more accessible</li> <li>Launch partnership with AARP to assist with streamlining application process for elderly residents</li> <li>Employ office "advocates" to ensure underserved get support they need</li> <li>Consider driver service kiosks at libraries and other visible locations</li> <li>Enable interoperability within state Secretary of State systems and between Secretary of State and city/I-Pass systems to more efficiently deliver overlapping services</li> </ul>
Incentivize electric vehicles and study ways to properly fund transportation infrastructure and public transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pass incentives / rebates to lower EV purchase price, charging equipment / installation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower electric vehicle registration fees</li> <li>Leverage Secretary of State channels to educate drivers and communicate benefits of EVs</li> <li>Consider alternative funding mechanisms for infrastructure funding and public transit (e.g., vehicles miles traveled (VMT) tax, vehicle registration fees tied to vehicle value, or other</li> </ul>
Advocate for and pass large package of road safety measures to reduce fatalities and improve safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze road safety and collision data</li> <li>Remove discriminatory pedestrian jaywalking laws</li> <li>Repeal law disallowing hanging objects from rearview mirror</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revamp IL driver's exam content and on-road test to protect vulnerable road users, particularly bicyclists and pedestrians</li> <li>Update rules of road, adopt "stop and yield" policy for bicycle safety</li> <li>Create targeted communications to driver groups about risks of distracted driving, speeding, and other dangerous behaviors</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Pass legislation banning recording and video conferencing while operating a vehicle</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase required behind-the-wheel training hours for driving students aged 15-18 and institute requirement for 18-21 age group</li><li>Consider lowering BAC limit from .08 to reduce drunk driving incidents</li><li>Increase vehicle registration fees for oversized trucks/SUVs</li><li>Consider autonomous vehicle regulations that limit usage in specific areas for safety reasons</li><li>Clarify Secretary of State Police jurisdiction and hire more road investigators to monitor large vehicles and promote road safety</li></ul>



# Ethics and Office Policies Committee Findings

ALEXI GIANNOULIAS • SECRETARY OF STATE





## Ethics and Office Policies Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Ethics and Office Policies** is to restore the public's trust in government and redefine public service in Illinois.

Success in this area will be measured by improved trust in government, increased applications and filling of vacancies within the Office, increased employee morale, and improved user experience in utilizing lobbyist registration.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities the Ethics and Office Policies Committee found, and the public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Need to rebuild trust in government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Modeling expectations works"</li> <li>▪ "I'd like to see politicians here to distance themselves from 'the elite' and show us that they are no different than the citizens they represent."</li> <li>▪ "Walk the walk; not just talk the talk"</li> </ul>
Desire for increased accountability and transparency (in ethics-related policies and enforcement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Take criminal complaints against major corporations seriously"</li> <li>▪ "It would be good to see which officers from corporations or LLCs registered in the state are actively lobbying for legislation or specific projects from state agencies."</li> <li>▪ "I'd like to see more accountability in the Illinois government"</li> <li>▪ "There are inconsistencies that need to be addressed"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to improve employee value proposition, including technology upgrades to enable employees (e.g., collaboration tools) and flexible working environments (e.g., remote work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "I am super excited for the Future of the Office. We need pay that is just and fair for the increased workload that we are doing and transparent leadership that will continue the motto of 'customer service above all'"</li> <li>▪ "Please help your employees"</li> <li>▪ "We are in desperate need of technological upgrades"</li> <li>▪ "Advocate for minimum wage increase relief."</li> <li>▪ "Facilities need better protections for chronically ill, disabled, and immunocompromised staff. We are most at risk from COVID. We need more remote work options for vulnerable people."</li> </ul>



In addition, this committee and the public stressed the need for more access to and communication with the Secretary of State, as summarized below.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Need to improve access to Secretary of State facilities and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Create a "re-entry" packet for citizens after incarceration, suffering from homelessness or other long-term absences, which would include documents to assist in obtaining a driver's license or state ID card; provide info on registering to vote and link to partners that assist in obtaining housing, work, and training."</li> <li>▪ "Please launch a Statewide ID drive to register individuals with developmental disabilities by expanding the current Mobile Unit. It is very, very challenging for a facility that serves people with IDD or a caregiver to transport a person with special needs to an office where they must wait in line and navigate the process."</li> <li>▪ "Create welcoming, accessible spaces to ensure first experiences are a quality, lasting one"</li> </ul>
Desire from employees for more communication and opportunities to give feedback, suggest ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "We have many ideas and insights to share with you as we move forward"</li> <li>▪ "Talk with employees that are in direct contact with customers and paperwork"</li> <li>▪ "Consider a task force on this issue"</li> <li>▪ "I'm currently an employee with the Secretary of State. This is the first time I believe I'm able to express myself"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to improve employee value proposition, including technology upgrades to enable employees (e.g., collaboration tools) and flexible working environments (e.g., remote work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "I am super excited for the Future of the Office. We need pay that is just and fair for the increased workload that we are doing and transparent leadership that will continue the motto of 'customer service above all'"</li> <li>▪ "Please help your employees"</li> <li>▪ "We are in desperate need of technological upgrades"</li> <li>▪ "Advocate for minimum wage increase relief."</li> <li>▪ "Facilities need better protections for chronically ill, disabled, and immunocompromised staff. We are most at risk from COVID. We need more remote work options for vulnerable people."</li> </ul>
Desire for more diverse staff, as well as attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "We need strong, diverse teams"</li> <li>▪ "We need diversity in all locations"</li> <li>▪ "Provide opportunities for people to connect at work"</li> </ul>



**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Ethics and Office Policies Committee included:

- Model good, ethical government by creating and enforcing policies for staff with regard to lobbyist interactions.
- Position the Secretary of State as a leader in ethics reform by including more disclosure on activities, relationships, and economic interests in intersectional legislative strategy
- Modernize the lobbyist registration database to make it more accessible
- Conduct budget and procurement audit to understand where money is being spent and align with "north star values"
- Develop legislative strategy that includes stricter laws for disclosure on activities, relationships, and economic interests to position Secretary of State as leader in ethics reform
- Seek employee ideas and feedback and establish mechanism for consistent communication and outreach
- Develop and implement a DEI&A strategy
- Update talent and human resource-related policies and processes to support new technologies, boost morale, and empower employees
- Strengthen employee value proposition for current and future employees
- Promote public service as a career path by creating opportunities for young adults to learn about public service and interact with Secretary of State
- Conduct an accessibility assessment of Secretary of State facilities and services to solicit consumer feedback and identify areas for improvement (e.g., handicap parking, signage, and hours)
- Develop a communication and outreach strategy to engage with stakeholders and constituents on a regular basis

To address these opportunities, the Ethics and Office Policies Committee proposes the following strategies and short- and long-term actions the Office can take.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Model good, ethical government through creating and enforcing policies for staff with regard to lobbyist interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct an audit of current ethics policies across the Office</li> <li>▪ Benchmark best-in-class policies regarding lobbyist interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design, vet, and roll out updated policies</li> </ul>
Modernize the lobbyist registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct assessment of current lobbyist registration system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design updated lobbyist registration database to improve</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
database to make it more accessible		user experience (including the ability to export information into standard file formats), and make it interoperable with other related systems
Conduct budget & procurement audit to understand where money is being spent and align with "north star values"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct audit of Secretary of State budget</li> <li>Look at where lobbyist registration money can be contributed to implementing projects in line with values (e.g., building of new lobbyist database)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct audit annually to ensure procurement aligns with values (e.g., spend by sustainable, diverse, small-business, and women-owned businesses)</li> </ul>
Develop legislative strategy that includes stricter laws for disclosure on activities, relationships, and economic interests to position Secretary of State as leader in ethics reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline legislative priorities, including:</li> <li>Clarify Lobbyist Registration Act</li> <li>Expand registration for units of local government with contract lobbyists</li> <li>Expand disclosure requirements (e.g., relationships and economic interest)</li> <li>Find bill sponsor(s) to champion through legislature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a resource to manage ambiguity in Lobbyist Registration Act guidelines</li> <li>Continue advocating for ethics reform laws</li> </ul>
Seek employee ideas and feedback and establish mechanism for consistent communication and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct survey to understand employee sentiment</li> <li>Launch visiting / listening tour</li> <li>Offer a virtual suggestion box to engage Secretary of State employees</li> <li>Host regular town hall meetings either virtually or in person with Secretary of State leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate cross-departmentally to identify opportunities for monthly pop-up Secretary of State sites</li> </ul>



Given the importance of incorporating employee and constituent feedback, this committee proposed the following potential strategies and actions.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Develop and implement a DEI&A <sup>1</sup> strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct assessment of current DEI&amp;A practices (e.g., employee attrition rates, minority representation, procurement spend by business type)</li> <li>Dedicate resources to DEI&amp;A work within Secretary of State’s Office (e.g., hire Chief DEI&amp;A Officer)</li> <li>Develop a DEI&amp;A plan</li> <li>Explore opportunities to encourage consistent cultural celebrations (e.g., Diwali, Pride, and Hispanic Heritage)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an annual DEI&amp;A report</li> <li>Explore opportunities to leverage Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) affinity groups</li> </ul>
Update talent and human resource-related policies and processes to support new technologies, boost morale, and empower employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct assessment on current HR and talent policies and processes (e.g., hiring processes)</li> <li>Determine what is law, what is policy, and what is practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procure and implement an applicant tracking system<sup>2</sup> (ATS) for all Secretary of State departments</li> <li>Review hiring policies and competency exams to see if still applicable or required</li> <li>Explore remote / flexible / hybrid work options</li> <li>Update performance management system</li> </ul>
Strengthen employee value proposition for current and future employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmark compensation and benefits across government agencies</li> <li>Update new employee onboarding to communicate the Secretary of State value propositions including</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore volunteer time-off (VTO) opportunities for full-time staff</li> <li>Offer financial wellness workshops (e.g., 401K and</li> </ul>

1 . This section depicts internal aspects of a DEI&A strategy, focusing primarily on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEI&A) within the agency. For more accessibility-specific information, please see ‘conduct an accessibility assessment of Secretary of State facilities...’ in subsequent strategies

2 Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) allow recruiters and employers to digitally track candidates throughout the recruiting and hiring process. The current process is a paper application



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
	centralized resources (e.g., benefits), training schedules, and ways employees can get involved	<p>pension) to all Secretary of State staff regardless of tenure<sup>3</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore opportunities to offer tuition reimbursement</li> <li>▪ Develop a mentor network for new hires</li> <li>▪ Identify opportunities to recognize internal leaders (e.g., advocates on disability issues and champions of diversity)</li> </ul>
Promote public service as a career path by creating opportunities for young adults to learn about public service and interact with the Secretary of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design hands-on learning opportunities for high school or community college students to work directly in the Secretary of State’s Office (e.g., Jesse White Public Service Fellowship)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roll out program and host pilot</li> </ul>
Conduct an accessibility assessment of Secretary of State facilities and services to solicit consumer feedback and identify areas for improvement (e.g., handicap parking, signage, and hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design an accessibility assessment using best practices and universal guidelines (e.g., ADA<sup>4</sup>)</li> <li>▪ Open dialogue with Secretary of State facilities and operations to proactively identify focus areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administer accessibility assessment across Secretary of State facilities</li> <li>▪ Engage community organizations (e.g., AARP) and the public to solicit input</li> <li>▪ Develop a facilities improvement plan</li> <li>▪ Execute facilities improvement plan</li> <li>▪ Socialize and communicate outcomes within Secretary of State departments and beyond the agency</li> <li>▪ Increase enforcement of ADA parking violations by Secretary of State police (e.g., holiday patrols)</li> <li>▪ Improve website design (e.g., WCAG<sup>5</sup>) and accessibility (e.g.,</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Current policy allows employees to attend one class after 5 years of service

<sup>4</sup> Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

<sup>5</sup> Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
		<p>online consultations and scheduling)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to provide Secretary of State services (e.g., pop-up Secretary of State sites) to access vulnerable communities (e.g., recently released from correctional custody)</li> </ul>
<p>Develop a communication and outreach strategy to engage with stakeholders and constituents on a regular basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to define an external communication strategy in coordination with internal communications</li> <li>Begin to schedule external speaking engagements and opportunities to engage with community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore proactive scheduling opportunities (e.g., pop-up events, and ad-hoc panels) to promote key priorities to public</li> <li>Develop a monthly video series (e.g., Ten Things Young Drivers Need to Know)</li> <li>Leverage Secretary of State social media accounts (e.g., Instagram and Facebook) to support broader communication strategies</li> </ul>



# **Library Enhancements Committee Findings**

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## Library Enhancements Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Library Enhancements** is to champion access to information by equitably distributing library resources (e.g., online education resources, databases, and e-books), activating collaborative partnerships, and supporting freedom of thought.

If successful, this would mean increased library utilization, reduced number of Illinois residents not served by a library system, and increased number of inter-office initiatives.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities Library Enhancements Committee found, and public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Opportunity to improve equity of access to libraries and library resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We need to find a way to offer public library services to the one million residents of IL without access today"</li> <li>"Libraries are anchors in our communities and provide much-needed services to residents of Illinois"</li> <li>"Secretary of State needs to be a catalyst to expand access. There are one million Illinois residents without access to library resources or basic information needs"</li> <li>"There are some libraries with budgets of less than \$20,000"</li> </ul>
Desire to provide a statewide resource package (e.g., databases and online educational resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"A core database package would equalize the information playing field and give every single person in the state the same access to essential and authoritative resources that can help them navigate their daily lives"</li> <li>"My mid-sized library, for example, sets aside \$65,000 for databases that we'd much rather use on programming or hiring another staff member"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to narrow digital divides with technology hubs and mobile services (e.g., DMV pop-ups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"A state-coordinated and funded digital library would increase access and start to make a dent in the one million currently unserved"</li> <li>"Please coordinate across departments to offer services everywhere people go (i.e., DMV kiosks in libraries)"</li> </ul>
Desire to support freedom of thought and diverse stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We need to affirm the importance of materials that represent all viewpoints and denounce the efforts of intimidation by those who seek to stifle representation and freedom of thought"</li> <li>"BIPOC and LGBTQ+ authors and readers are being disproportionately targeted for removal from library collections"</li> </ul>



In addition to the opportunities outlined above, the committee noted the following.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Shortage of qualified librarians and library media specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Every school in Illinois needs a certified librarian. Not only do they curate collections to the needs of their school, but they also provide valuable instruction on information literacy"</li> <li>▪ "I am the only certified librarian for approximately 1,200 students"</li> <li>▪ "School districts need to have full-time, certified librarians in each building for students to be successful, master academic standards, and graduate with bright futures ahead of them"</li> </ul>
Libraries are often inequitably funded and budget burdened, with an opportunity to leverage Secretary of State resources to funding gaps (e.g., for school libraries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Grants for public school libraries are very important to curating the best library possible for their patrons"</li> <li>▪ "We need more funding to improve buildings and collections, especially as libraries are some of the last refuges for those experiencing homelessness"</li> <li>▪ "Investing in public libraries invests in infrastructure, communities, education, businesses, and people of all ages"</li> </ul>
Impact may be accelerated through collaborative partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Librarians also order books for the school and provide activities that form community and parent partnerships"</li> <li>▪ "We can't accomplish everything we want to without partnerships. We are stronger together"</li> </ul>
Desire to leverage Secretary of State resources to support school libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Decades of research, some of which is specific to Illinois, supports further investment in school libraries"</li> <li>▪ "Data proves that schools with school libraries provide students with a more thorough and higher quality education!"</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Library Enhancements Committee included:

- Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner organizations (e.g., ILA<sup>6</sup>, RAILS<sup>7</sup>, and IHLS<sup>8</sup>) to expand access
- Use Illinois State Library (ILS) budget to provide statewide library resources (i.e., databases) to increase access to information and relieve budget-burdened libraries
- Advance technology adoption and digital resources to automate internal procedures (e.g., recordkeeping), expand public facing services (e.g., WiFi), and remove geographic barriers in accessing library resources (e.g., e-books)

<sup>6</sup> Illinois Library Association (ILA)

<sup>7</sup> Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS)

<sup>8</sup> Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS)



- Create an environment to attract and retain certified librarians and library media specialists
- Explore ways to expand and equitably distribute funding across libraries statewide
- Leverage the Illinois Library and Information Network (ILLINET) to educate and engage the public
- Leverage existing Secretary of State assets to test inter-agency collaborations (e.g., mobile DMV sites)
- Engage the public to drive understanding of end-user demands

To address these opportunities, the Library Enhancements Committee proposes the following strategies and short- and long-term actions the Office may take.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Strengthen collaborative relationships with partner organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) to expand access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with partner organizations and state agencies to understand the demographic characteristics of unserved areas</li> <li>▪ Begin to identify opportunities to offer library cards to educators, students, and school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Help shape legislation to expand equitable access (e.g., universal library system)</li> <li>▪ Explore TBBS<sup>9</sup> expansion opportunities, including additional outreach and education</li> <li>▪ Host book talks and events to generate conversation, including diverse authors or stories with diverse characters</li> <li>▪ Identify opportunities to improve trustee education and engagement</li> <li>▪ Explore public-private (e.g., Amazon and Rivian) partnerships to expand resources and access in rural communities</li> <li>▪ Leverage Secretary of State platform to educate system members, funders, and other stakeholders about who is unserved in Illinois</li> </ul>
Use ISL <sup>10</sup> budget to provide statewide library resources (i.e., databases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fund a statewide core suite (e.g., ProQuest, Gale, EBSCO,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leverage ISL negotiating power to supplement statewide resources with additional databases (e.g.,</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS)

<sup>10</sup> Illinois State Library (ISL)



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
to increase access to information and relieve budget-burdened libraries	<p>and World Book) of electronic databases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to support CARLI's<sup>11</sup> Online Educational Resources Initiative</li> <li>Create a line item in the ISL budget to finance library initiatives such as Online Educational Resources (OERs)</li> </ul>	<p>Reference USA, JSTOR, and The New York Times) and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use ISL purchasing power to negotiate with publishers to increase access to e-books and reduce associated licensing fees (i.e., License to Read)</li> </ul>
Advance technology adoption and digital resources to automate internal procedures (e.g., recordkeeping), expand public facing services (e.g., WiFi), and remove geographic barriers in accessing library resources (e.g., e-books)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore ways to digitize and automate paperwork requirements</li> <li>Continue to expand high-speed internet in rural service regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with academic institutions (e.g., University of Illinois, University of Chicago) to develop a Digital Navigator<sup>12</sup> program</li> <li>Explore options to offer a statewide digital library with partner organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) and academic institutions</li> <li>Explore solutions like rentable hot spots in places where Wi-Fi expansion may be limited</li> <li>Identify partners to co-host digital literacy workshops (e.g., navigating library resources)</li> <li>Revise Secretary of State protocol or make it easier for libraries to automate record keeping (e.g., Document Retention Process)</li> <li>Identify opportunities to participate (e.g., workshops, informational seminars) in the Federal Communications Commission's E-rate program to help schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband</li> <li>Identify partners to raise awareness about important</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI)

<sup>12</sup> Digital navigators are trained individuals, typically based in a community organization, who provide tailored support for the full spectrum of digital inclusion needs, from internet and device access to digital skill building



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
<p>Create an environment to attract and retain certified librarians and library media specialists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with academic institutions (e.g., University of Illinois, and University of Chicago) to identify policy and monetary levers</li> <li>Partner with peer organizations (e.g., ILA, RAILS, and IHLS) to offer professional development opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>community topics (e.g., health, financial, and education services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and empower young adults to participate in library-affiliated programs</li> <li>Raise awareness (e.g., grant opportunities and progress updates) at library-related conventions (e.g., Illinois Library Association’s Annual Conference)</li> <li>Explore an Illinois State Library Fellowship Program</li> <li>Explore opportunities to expand scholarships, offer subsidized loans, and pilot tuition reimbursement programs</li> </ul>
<p>Explore ways to expand and equitably distribute funding across libraries statewide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline grant allocations and their intended versus actual return on investment</li> <li>Explore opportunities to make thoughtful appointments (e.g., Illinois State Library Advisory Committee and the Director of Illinois State Library) to support potential recommendations (e.g., databases, online educational resources, e-books, and certified librarians)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore additional Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant opportunities for community colleges</li> <li>Prioritize grant allocations based on need and impact potential</li> <li>Leverage Secretary of State platform to educate municipalities and explore local levy options</li> <li>Identify grant opportunities to better support summer reading programs</li> <li>Develop a suite of out-of-the-box marketing and public engagement templates for libraries to use</li> </ul>



In addition to the above, this committee recommended the following potential strategies and actions to take.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Leverage the Illinois Library and Information Network (ILLINET) to educate (e.g., DEI and sustainability) and engage the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stand-up a monthly special topic series (e.g., Climate &amp; Sustainability Month, New Entrepreneur 101, DEI<sup>13</sup>, and LGBTQ+ Rights)</li> <li>Leverage Secretary of State platform to generate press exposure for public, school, and academic libraries (e.g., a calendar of the major library week celebrations and conventions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore ways to bring Spanish language literacy programs to public libraries</li> <li>Pilot subsidized iREAD programs in partnership with the Illinois Library Association</li> <li>Continue to support successful ISL initiatives (e.g., afterschool programming and grant funding), build on enhancements, and pilot new ideas (e.g., expanded adult literacy programs)</li> <li>Increase collaboration and coordination between existing literacy programs (e.g., Adult Literacy and Child Literacy)</li> <li>Raise awareness for Illinois State Library Patent Repository</li> </ul>
Leverage existing Secretary of State assets to test inter-agency collaborations (e.g., mobile DMV sites)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify pilot opportunities across Secretary of State departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase DMV mobile service pop-up sites across library system partners</li> <li>Stand-up voter registration sites before elections in high-traffic areas (e.g., Cook, Lake, and Kane County) in conjunction with local clerks and recorders</li> <li>Identify opportunities to partner with Secretary of State Department of Business Services; the State Chamber of Commerce; and the new University of Illinois Innovation Center to offer tutorials and new entrepreneur workshops</li> </ul>
Engage the public to drive understanding of end-user demands		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess offerings across libraries (e.g., books and other resources) and compare against user demands</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)



# Securities Division Policies Committee Findings

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## Securities Division Policies Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Securities Division Policies** is to boldly protect Illinoisans, especially the most vulnerable, from constantly evolving threats from fraudsters and scammers.

Success in this area would show a reduction in instances of fraud, an increase in corruption investigations, an increase in the number of convictions, and an increase in education engagements.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities the Securities Division Policies Committee found, and public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Challenge of evolving nature of securities threats and increased participation in markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "There are so many ways today that people are being targeted for financial and securities crimes"</li> <li>▪ "Think about external trends that are affecting this team today, like the democratization of assets"</li> </ul>
Desire for more aggressive protections against fraud and scams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Take criminal complaints against major corporations seriously"</li> <li>▪ "They don't have enforcement authority – they can't bring a criminal case"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to improve public awareness of common scams and how Securities Division provides enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Secretary of State brought a case and got her money back and vindicated her; there was no press release, there was no public announcement"</li> <li>▪ "Secretary of State has the ability to educate on these financial topics"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to empower workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Roughly half the office positions are vacant"</li> <li>▪ "What is appropriate compensation and how do we go about recruiting?"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to increase awareness of Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The public has hardly any awareness that this division exists, and they need to inform the public who they are, what they do, and how they can help"</li> </ul>

### Recommendations:

Specific recommendations from the Securities Division Policies Committee included:

- Identify typologies of most common frauds and create targeted prevention and response efforts to protect all Illinoisans, especially the most vulnerable, from securities crimes
- Advocate for prosecutorial authority and streamlined prosecution process





- Launch public education campaigns on fraud prevention and detection, including messaging tailored to vulnerable communities, to inform Illinoisans of evolving financial risks
- Publicize fraud and scam enforcement triumphs to deter future acts and draw attention to Division (i.e., to enhance recruiting)
- Enhance employee recruiting and retention practices to build a committed workforce
- Streamline investigator training to realize efficiencies and promote consistencies in skills
- Improve security at Secretary of State facilities

To address these opportunities, the Securities Division Policies Committee proposed the following strategies.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Identify typologies of most common frauds and create targeted prevention and response efforts to protect all Illinoisans, especially the most vulnerable, from securities crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify typologies of common securities crimes (e.g., misrepresentation of what selling, 3rd party account hacking, and relative account theft) and most vulnerable populations (e.g., individuals over the age of sixty-five)</li> <li>▪ Explore best practices in prevention and enforcement from other states (e.g., Arizona or Massachusetts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build a roadmap to prevent, enforce, and respond to instances of corruption typologies, with specific measures for vulnerable communities</li> <li>▪ Increase advocacy to enforcement actors for appropriate prosecution (e.g., AG, SEC, and Fed)</li> <li>▪ Pass legislation to increase securities industry regulation</li> <li>▪ Expand reporting options (including determining effective channels for vulnerable communities to report securities crimes)</li> <li>▪ Explore partnerships with local monitors (e.g., banks) to increase monitoring of malpractice</li> <li>▪ Implement targeted solutions for vulnerable populations</li> </ul>
Advocate for prosecutorial authority and streamlined prosecution process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct a diagnostic of current reporting and identify gaps to best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate to IL Attorney General for Securities Division authority to bring criminal and civil charges</li> <li>▪ Advocate for &amp; support legislative change to streamline</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
		reporting & prosecution process
Launch public education campaigns on fraud prevention and detection, including messaging tailored to vulnerable communities to inform Illinoisans of evolving financial risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify specific trusted messengers and modes of communication for each stakeholder group likely to be impacted by securities crimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with these trusted messengers on education and PSA campaigns that are directly targeted at the people most likely to be harmed</li> <li>Identify opportunities to increase awareness of Secretary of State securities and policies functions across the state, and especially downstate</li> </ul>
Publicize fraud and scam enforcement triumphs to deter future acts and draw attention to the department (i.e., to enhance recruiting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue public statements, call press conferences, and/or issue press releases when scammers are caught</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the success of increased publicization on goals (e.g., hiring and deterrence)</li> </ul>
Enhance employee recruiting and retention practices to build a committed workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study compensation of team vs. comparable roles in other agencies within and beyond IL to evaluate the need for adjustments in compensation or benefits</li> <li>Identify critical gaps in the existing team and make intentional moves to fill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore and act on recruiting best practices</li> <li>Understand the workforce required to carry out prevention and enforcement practices (e.g., more lawyers, auditors, and data analytic capabilities)</li> <li>Based on a comprehensive study, adjust compensation as needed and continue working to fill open staff positions</li> <li>Upskill staff on anti-corruption measures</li> </ul>
Streamline investigator training to realize efficiencies and promote consistency in skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine current investigator training for sworn officers &amp; civilian employees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include civilian Securities investigators in sworn investigator training where possible</li> </ul>
Improve security at Secretary of State facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps in security at Secretary of State facilities (e.g., parking enforcement and navigating disputes at DMVs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify effective ways to partner across Secretary of State Offices and local law enforcement</li> </ul>



# Voter Rights and Registration Committee Findings

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## Voter Rights and Registration Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Voter Rights and Registration** is to be the national model for voter access, engagement, and turnout.

If successful, this would mean increased voter registration rates, increased voter participation, and decreased racial, socioeconomic, and age-based disparities in voter turnout.

In reviewing public comments and in our discussions, the Voter Rights and Registration Committee found several common themes. Based on those themes, we propose the following challenges and opportunities.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Current voter registration access points (e.g., DMVs) are not perceived as customer-centric and trusted resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "We need to view our DMVs as assets, places where people can go to drive our country forward – from licenses to registering to vote"</li> <li>▪ "Secretary of State employees should be equipped with the best information and training available to ensure we are serving the public to our fullest potential"</li> </ul>
It can be difficult to find voter-related information and register to vote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "I would love to see Illinois share voter information--how to register, how to access a sample ballot, all voting options – like they do in California. It's all there at your fingertips"</li> <li>▪ "Access to information is where it all starts. We can't encourage people to register or vote if they don't know where to go or how to get there"</li> </ul>
Young adults are not adequately encouraged to participate <sup>14</sup> in elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Young adults aren't showing up to vote. They are the future of our country; we need to do something to change that"</li> <li>▪ "Knowledge is Power and our high school teenagers need to be given a vote and voice"</li> <li>▪ "We took our college-bound seniors to polls in record numbers by word of mouth alone"</li> </ul>
Disadvantaged communities (e.g., previously incarcerated populations, and communities of color <sup>15</sup> ) lack access to voting sites,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Ensure those who are in jail awaiting trial are given easy access to their right to vote and re-enfranchise those who have served their time. Those seem like worthy causes for the Secretary of State to explore"</li> <li>▪ "Civic participation is disproportionately difficult in disadvantaged communities and communities of color – from</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> Only 55.0% of the 18-24 voting population participated in 2020 elections per Kaiser Family Foundation

<sup>15</sup> Less than half [46.8%] of the Hispanic voting population participated in 2020 elections – compared to the state average of 68.4% per Kaiser Family Foundation



Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
transportation, and registration assistance	getting to the poll to registering to vote – there are barriers all along the way"

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from Voter Rights and Registration Committee included:

- Help shape legislation to expand equitable access (e.g., backend automatic voter registration and pre-registration)
- Leverage the National Voter Registration Act (the "Motor Voter" law) to drive voter registration in settings where people who are less likely to be registered to vote frequently (e.g., Medicaid enrollment, social service organizations, and health care settings)
- Proactively inform constituents about voting locations and election dates, using both technology (e.g., text messages) and community spaces (e.g., libraries)
- Advocate for expanded mail-in services and ballot drop box locations to reach more voters
- Proactively inform constituents about voting locations and election dates, using both technology (e.g., text messages) and community spaces (e.g., libraries)
- Partner to identify civic education opportunities (e.g., Rules of the Road and training in schools) to expand access to information for young adults
- Explore digital solutions to centralize voter-related information (e.g., election calendars, locations, deadlines, and registration requirements)
- Partner with other Secretary of State facilities (e.g., libraries) to reinforce voter-related support functions (e.g., voter registration and early voting) within the Office
- Explore external partnerships to raise awareness and reach otherwise hard to access audiences (e.g., young adults and disadvantaged communities)

To address these opportunities, the Voter Rights and Registration Committee recommends pursuing the following strategies.



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Help shape legislation to expand equitable access (e.g., backend AVR <sup>16</sup> and pre-registration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate Illinois General Assembly to support pre-registration for young adults</li> <li>Advocate Illinois General Assembly to support back-end AVR change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage open dialogue with the Illinois General Assembly and State Board of Elections to identify opportunities to equitably expand access</li> </ul>
Leverage the NVRA <sup>17</sup> (the "Motor Voter" law) to drive voter registration in settings where people who are less likely to be registered to vote frequent (e.g., Medicaid enrollment, social service organizations, and health care settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-list high-impact locations for voter access across Secretary of State facilities (e.g., libraries), in forms and online resources (e.g., Medicaid enrollment) and beyond (e.g., other public spaces)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate chosen sites "voter-registration agencies" under NVRA, if necessary<sup>18</sup></li> <li>Create materials tailored to each chosen location / access point</li> <li>Train staff to answer voter registration questions in a non-partisan manner</li> <li>Track outcomes and double down on most effective messaging and locations</li> </ul>
Advocate for expanded mail-in services and ballot drop box locations to reach more voters		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a mail-in-ballot awareness campaign using Secretary of State platform to address misinformation and increase adoption</li> <li>Advocate for more polling places and universal polling locations in high-traffic jurisdictions</li> </ul>
Proactively inform constituents about voting locations and election dates, using both technology (e.g., text messages) and community spaces (e.g., libraries)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and draft automated voting reminders</li> <li>Create or adapt Secretary of State email lists to provide constituents with monthly updates</li> <li>Establish an automated system to send election calendars, locations, deadlines, and registration requirements via text, email, or by mail</li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)

<sup>17</sup> National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)

<sup>18</sup> All offices that provide public assistance and services to persons with disabilities are voter registration agencies under the NVRA. Additionally, per the U.S. Department of Justice, a state is free to designate other governmental offices and nongovernmental locations (e.g., private colleges) as voter registration agencies



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Partner to identify civic education opportunities (e.g., Rules of the Road and training in schools) to expand access to information for young adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify organizations to partner with and begin to outline the parameters of partnerships</li> <li>In partnership with these organizations, identify events that can be used to engage young voters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the development of updated civics curriculum</li> <li>Explore peer-to-peer opportunities to engage students in round tables, panels, and town hall discussions</li> <li>Collaborate with school districts to include voter-related information in high-school commencement materials</li> </ul>
Explore digital solutions to centralize voter-related information (e.g., election calendars, locations, deadlines, and registration requirements)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with State Board of Elections to update voter-related data on a monthly cadence</li> <li>Collaborate with State Board of Elections to enable ability to query voter-related information on website</li> <li>Leverage Secretary of State platform to centralize voter-related information and become the one-stop-shop for voter-related resources</li> </ul>
Partner with other Secretary of State facilities (e.g., libraries) to reinforce voter-related support functions (e.g., voter registration and early voting) within the Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to identify areas of overlap across Secretary of State departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a voter rights and registration-specific training module</li> <li>Launch and brand training module (e.g., Voter Corps) with visible pins at high-traffic public-facing Secretary of State sites</li> <li>Stand-up an Ongoing Excellence Campaign with monthly topics and self-service recourses for Secretary of State staff</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Explore external partnerships to raise awareness and reach otherwise hard to access audiences <sup>19</sup> (e.g., young adults and disadvantaged communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin to explore mainstream partnerships (e.g., local artists, musicians, and athletes)</li> <li>▪ Begin to map bottlenecks in the civic engagement and voter registration process</li> <li>▪ Leverage Secretary of State platform to convene local businesses on topics like civic engagement and voter registration</li> <li>▪ Begin to plan milestone event for the USA's 250th anniversary in 2026</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide a toolkit for partners hoping to offer pop-up registration events</li> <li>▪ Partner with community organizations (e.g., churches, sororities, and fraternities) to increase awareness</li> <li>▪ Identify local entertainment venues (e.g., concerts, museums, theaters, and shopping malls) to offer pop-up services</li> <li>▪ Begin to explore partnerships with civically active local media agencies (e.g., Lyrical Lemonade)</li> <li>▪ Tailor resources, tools, and events to address bottlenecks and facilitate access</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Only 67.8% and 52.4% of Black and Hispanic voting populations are registered to vote, respectively – compared to the state average of 74.4% per Kaiser Family Foundation





# Technology Enhancements Committee Findings

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## Technology Enhancements Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Technology Enhancements** is to leverage technology to make the provision of services as quick and easy as possible for the constituents of Illinois by reducing the number of IT support requests.

If successful, this would mean reduced wait times, increased customer satisfaction, fewer and higher-quality in-person interactions, and reduced time per transaction for the people of Illinois. This would also result in higher employee retention and a stronger talent application pool for open positions.

The Technology Enhancements Committee and public comments identified the challenges and opportunities summarized below.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Lack of online/digital capabilities lead to long wait times (time tax) and poor customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Giving Illinoisans the ability to have our driver’s license in our digital wallets would be a tremendous step forward"</li> <li>▪ "If we could do things like renew our driver’s license or vote online, that would make being an Illinois citizen much easier. Reduce the amount of things one must go to the DMV for"</li> <li>▪ I am a 22-year employee of the Secretary of State, my last 8 years being in the Commercial and Farm Truck division. The only options these clients have to pay are by mail, or by driving to Springfield. Most of our clients are coming from the Chicagoland area and complain greatly that they don’t have an online payment option"</li> </ul>
Desire to expand offerings and make Secretary of State services more accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Given the importance of the Secretary of State’s Office in so many aspects of day-to-day life, it is critical that Illinois residents of all backgrounds and languages can easily access our online portals"</li> <li>▪ "Increase hours at Secretary of State locations on consistent, select days to ensure everyone has access to in-person services"</li> <li>▪ "Non-binary Illinois residents need to have the option of marking their gender as X - please make this happen"</li> <li>▪ "I am not white. The Secretary of State must ensure all applications include a box where Middle Eastern-North African residents can identify with. Add a box for people like myself and my family to check off without feeling a sense of not belonging"</li> </ul>
Software and systems are customized, fragmented, and disconnected within offices and across department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "An integrated driver/registration solution is top of mind for everyone"</li> <li>▪ "The current IT system is old and antiquated. Make an integrated system of one person-one record. Allow an individual through one portal ID to do all their driver &amp; vehicle services as well as file their annual report for their business, register to vote, renew their notary</li> </ul>



Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
	<p>service, file their statement of economic interest or lobbyist disclosures"</p>
<p>Need to attract and retain top talent, ensure employees have proper training to administer new technologies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "We are missing out on top talent statewide by not having a process for candidates to fill out an application online"</li> <li>▪ "The hiring and job posting system need to be modernized. A computerized job application system should be developed like Central Management Services utilizes for State of Illinois jobs where the applicant can both view postings and apply for them online"</li> <li>▪ "Partner with DoIT and leverage their quantity discounts on best of breed technology solution... train staff on how to apply new technologies that will help improve results"</li> <li>▪ "We need our pay scales to be comparable to CMS and better raises, we get a raise and the insurance goes up so most people see about \$20 more a month. Our building is full of asbestos and lead"</li> </ul>
<p>Lack of clear communication and customer journeys can make engagement with Secretary of State services confusing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "There needs to be clear and consistent messaging and instructions regarding Real ID requirements and timelines on all social media and relevant web pages"</li> <li>▪ "Update the SOS website to have current and correct information. There are a lot of conflicting statements on the site"</li> <li>▪ "The website needs major updates. It's not user-friendly, it's hard to find the information you need with ease, and it's not aesthetically pleasing. I hope your Office plans on rolling out an updated website with clear site navigation"</li> <li>▪ "The website is extremely difficult to use when trying to understand the various forms that are needed for say - a transfer of title on a car. Also difficult on other business-related forms and registrations. Not at all clear on what is necessary or required"</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Technology Enhancements Committee included:

- Leverage new technologies to streamline core services, reduce wait times, and improve customer satisfaction
- Expand access to Secretary of State services through enhanced software tools and new methods of delivery
- Define use cases and create roadmap to build integrated digital user experiences and supporting IT systems and infrastructure that enable desired future capabilities
- Augment future organization through recruitment strategies, talent development, and improved collaboration tools



- Evaluate customer journeys and interactions with Secretary of State services to define archetypes and map engagements

To address these opportunities, the Technology Enhancements Committee proposed enacting the following strategies.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Leverage new technologies to streamline core services, reduce wait times, and improve customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin building appointment scheduling system for all offices/services (Skip-the-Line)</li> <li>▪ Scope launch of early pilot program for online service, dependent on feasibility, impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement digital IDs/driver's licenses, license plates, electronic vehicle registrations/titles, and insurance reporting</li> <li>▪ Enable document upload and verification to streamline licensing processes</li> <li>▪ Enable new online payment processing systems for Mobile ID events, commercial and farm licenses</li> <li>▪ Improve digital payment options to include payment via Apple Wallet, Apple Pay, PayPal, Zelle, tap-to-pay</li> <li>▪ Add iPads and other technology enablers at Secretary of State facilities to reduce in-person interaction time</li> <li>▪ Update computers, credit card processing machines, printers, fax machines, and other hardware to improve transaction speed</li> </ul>
Expand access to Secretary of State services through enhanced software tools and new methods of delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analyze population density and zip codes to scout best locations for additional mobile units</li> <li>▪ Implement legislation (i.e., HB3534) to enable gender-neutral markers ('X') on driver's licenses and state IDs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create Secretary of State app (including standard licensing services and renewals but also road conditions and new features/services)</li> <li>▪ Consider self-service kiosks at libraries and other visible locations</li> <li>▪ Invest in language processing, translation services, virtual assistants, QR codes, AI chatbots, and other tools</li> <li>▪ Evaluate potential of expanded partnership with Electronic Registration and Title (ERT) service providers</li> <li>▪ Increase number of mobile units</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Define use cases and create roadmap to build integrated digital user experiences and supporting IT systems and infrastructure that enable desired future capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define use cases for delivering streamlined digital user experiences</li> <li>Begin process to define vision for technology enablement and what technology can be used for</li> <li>Make non-PII data publicly available and accessible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop roadmap for longer-term transformation of underlying IT systems to enable future service capabilities</li> <li>Enable interoperability within state Secretary of State systems and between Secretary of State and other jurisdictions to deliver overlapping services more efficiently</li> <li>Combine driver licensing and vehicle registration into single process and system</li> <li>Consolidate services that drive revenue (e.g., licensing, tags, titling, taxes, and tolling) to enable real-time insight into finances, revenue collection</li> <li>Create online system for driving school/instructor licensing, reporting, compliance, and regulation</li> <li>Create portal for Medi-car safety certification</li> <li>Enhance automatic voter registration system and process</li> <li>Commission study on voting electronically/online</li> </ul>
Augment future organization through recruitment strategies, talent development, and improved collaboration tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch holistic review of operating model, workforce development strategy, including recruitment, retention, training, career development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop recruitment strategies to attract top-tier talent, including summer internships, tech recruiting specialists, and local workforce development partnerships)</li> <li>Improve overall employee value proposition (e.g., pay, titles, training, and career progression)</li> <li>Supplement IT staff with contractors to maintain staffing levels</li> <li>Implement Applicant Tracking System to move application system online</li> <li>Leverage tools (e.g., Teams, Slack, and Trello) to improve collaboration and reduce silos</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Evaluate customer journeys and interactions with Secretary of State services to define archetypes and map engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create demo videos for steps and documents required for key services (e.g., Real ID and business license renewal)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Create customer email journeys, text and app notifications for renewals and payment</li><li>▪ Audit IL Secretary of State domain registrations to ensure all variations redirect to secure <a href="https://ilsos.gov">https://ilsos.gov</a> (e.g., <a href="https://ilsos.com">ilsos.com</a> gateway timeout; <a href="https://ilsos.net">ilsos.net</a> remains in HTTP, which is not secure)</li><li>▪ Revamp Secretary of State website to better track customer navigation and provide clear, digestible information; add account management feature for residents to access their services through a portal</li><li>▪ Automate business licensing, articles of incorporation, annual reports</li><li>▪ Provide customers with auto-renew and multi-year renewal options</li></ul>



# **Business Services Committee Findings**

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## Business Services Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Business Services** is to make Illinois an entrepreneurial and business-minded state, with accessible support for all residents.

Success in this area would be measured by increased ease and speed of applications, increased user satisfaction throughout the application and compliance process, and increased access to business support materials.

The following table highlights the challenges and opportunities the Business Services Committee found, and the public feedback we received.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Desire for more clarity and communication about resources, documents, and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Give better explanations of the choices we have, so there is more clarity"</li> <li>▪ "It's hard to know what documents apply to you"</li> <li>▪ "Compliance piece is so confusing; it's so hard to navigate"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to be more customer-centric to reduce the burden on small business owner and non-profit operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Get virtual assistance – I don't want to have to call and not be sure if I'm calling the right number. Ideally, a video or a BOT would explain"</li> <li>▪ "Let us know in advance if we are about to be out of compliance"</li> <li>▪ "If you make a mistake on a form or filing, you have to pay again... that's not right"</li> <li>▪ As president of a non-profit, it has been frustrating using our tax-exempt form at different vendors. Standardizing that use among vendors would help so much to save time.</li> </ul>
Need to expand accessibility (e.g., handicap parking, hours of operation, and ADA <sup>4</sup> compliance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Expand hours of operation to 8:00 p.m. one day during the week to accommodate those with irregular workdays and hours."</li> <li>▪ "We need more help for individuals at facilities who have ASD (autism spectrum disorder such as Asperger's) ...they deserve the same compassion as other disabled individuals per ADA law."</li> </ul>
Paper-based, "20th-century" approach to technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "What is the highest level of tech Secretary of State can offer? An app would be great or you have an account – that would store your information and notify you when it's time for renewal. That general approach would make life easier"</li> <li>▪ "Employees are doing everything manually and can't keep up with demand... we need tech to be where it should be in 2022"</li> <li>▪ "A lot of ppl would be happier if everything was on their phone vs. snail mail"</li> <li>▪ "I had to go [to the facility] four different times over small things that could have been fixed if it was computerized"</li> </ul>





Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Let's fix mailing out paperwork (i.e., forms gets lost and customer's complaints) and make all titles digital" Disconnected services and resources lead to missed opportunities for better support</li> </ul>
<p>Disconnected services &amp; resources lead to missed opportunities for better support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Identify businesses that are Veteran Owned, so that IL Veteran Affairs can improve outreach to assist with navigating the bureaucracy of State Contracts, certification, and support."</li> </ul>
<p>Opportunity for more transparency to enable residents to find relevant information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It would be great to have a better way of knowing whether a corporation or Limited Liability Company (LLC) is in good standing with the state and to see the 990s for any nonprofits registered. Also, if possible, it would be interesting to see which officers from corporations or LLCs are actively lobbying for legislation or specific projects from state agencies.</li> <li>▪ Change how LLC managers or members are shown when one searches for LLC information. As of now, there is no clear designation of whether the person is an LLC manager or a member with management authority. Also, corporations have the option to file an interim report which may change any of its officers and/or directors at any time before filing an annual report; LLCs do not have this option and they should.</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Business Services Committee included:

- Set vision and goals, use data to baseline current practices, and track progress against key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Aggregate resources for each customer type to enable easy access to services
- Provide business services-101 orientation to business owners (e.g., B-Corp, LLC, and C-Corp) and aspiring entrepreneurs to enable better understanding of services
- Explore ways to digitize and automate paperwork requirements and filings to reduce burden on businesses and free up staff capacity
- Leverage tech solutions for customer service and accessibility (e.g., account portals, notifications model, application, and language translation)
- Support and empower staff to enable customer service improvements and rollout of developments
- Position Secretary of State as convener and establish mechanisms for stakeholder feedback (e.g., liaisons and business round tables)
- Utilize other Secretary of State departments (e.g., DMV kiosks and libraries) to reinforce business services support



- Identify overlap with other agencies and establish connection points to leverage resources and streamline customer experience
- Establish mechanism for celebrating businesses and non-profits in IL

To address these opportunities, the Business Services Committee proposed enacting the following strategies.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Set vision and goals, use data to baseline current practices, and track progress against KPIs <sup>20</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set goals and KPIs</li> <li>▪ Begin baseline of operations to understand business services across Secretary of State</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publish annual report that tracks progress against ongoing efforts</li> </ul>
Aggregate resources for each customer type to enable easy access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct rationalization of all forms and documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create repository of resources</li> <li>▪ Determine use cases for information</li> <li>▪ Group resources by user-type</li> <li>▪ Establish process for ongoing rationalization and review</li> <li>▪ Refine database of businesses and non-profits so other businesses and consumers can search</li> </ul>
Provide business services-101 orientation to business owners (e.g., B-Corp, LLC, and C-Corp) and aspiring entrepreneurs to enable better understanding of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify unanswered questions (e.g., forms, terms of incorporation) from business owners and aspiring business owners</li> <li>▪ Determine what resources (e.g., grants management and workshops) would be most helpful for business owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop "how-to" resources (e.g., How to Submit a Grant Application or How to File a Corp Name Change) for different types of users</li> <li>▪ Create short videos in multiple languages to give overview of resources and how to use</li> <li>▪ Conduct outreach with minority business owners and entrepreneurs for input</li> <li>▪ Consider partnering with small business incubators (e.g., SBDC at SIU<sup>21</sup> and ICNC<sup>22</sup>) to support aspiring business owners</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

<sup>21</sup> Small Business Development Center at Southern Illinois University (SBDC at SIU)

<sup>22</sup> Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago's Manufacturing Incubator (ICNC)



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider partnering with libraries to host training</li> </ul>
Explore ways to digitize and automate paperwork requirements and filings to reduce burden on businesses and free up staff capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline all use cases</li> <li>Outline physical and cyber security requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore best-in-class solutions from other states and municipalities</li> <li>Identify solution</li> <li>Customize for Secretary of State</li> <li>Launch pilot and seek feedback</li> <li>Quantify impact of this work</li> </ul>
Leverage tech solutions for customer service and accessibility (e.g., account portals, notifications model, application, and language translation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify FAQ<sup>23</sup></li> <li>Outline use cases across customer profiles and journeys (e.g., seniors, young adults, and immigrants)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Same as above</i></li> </ul>
Support and empower staff to enable customer service improvements and rollout of developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline requirements for every interaction (e.g., mobile and on-site)</li> <li>Conduct customer service training to cover goals and expectations, and enable cultural, ability, and tech-sensitive services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As resources are aggregated and consumer pathways are developed, train staff to identify consumer needs and connect to right resources</li> <li>As digital solutions are identified, train staff on process changes</li> </ul>
Position Secretary of State as convener and establish mechanisms for stakeholder feedback (e.g., liaisons and business round tables)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key stakeholder groups in business services</li> <li>Launch visiting tour of Secretary of State offices</li> <li>Begin quarterly business round table discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify additional topics (e.g., civic engagement and sustainability) to convene business community</li> <li>Begin to explore partnerships (e.g., Women's Business Development Center, and Goldman Sachs 100) to connect business incubation opportunities</li> </ul>
Utilize other Secretary of State departments (e.g., DMV kiosks and libraries) to reinforce business services support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify applicable learnings from Libraries Build Businesses</li> <li>Identify library and DMV sites as potential pilots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch programs to build businesses in libraries; track impact (e.g., people served)</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Identify overlap with other agencies and establish connection points to leverage resources and streamline customer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify interdependencies across IL agencies (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)</li> <li>Identify opportunities to leverage other agency support (e.g., VA for veteran-owned businesses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish opportunities (e.g., liaisons) to share information with other agencies to improve customer experience</li> <li>Explore additional partnerships (e.g., Chambers of Commerce) across jurisdictions (including municipalities) where information sharing could be beneficial</li> </ul>
Establish mechanism for celebrating businesses and non-profits in IL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish opportunities (e.g., liaisons) to share information with other agencies to improve customer experience</li> <li>Explore additional partnerships (e.g., Chambers of Commerce) across jurisdictions (including municipalities) where information sharing could be beneficial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out award / recognition program</li> <li>Explore additional ways to celebrate (e.g., sharing growth stories) small business success stories</li> </ul>



# **Environmental Initiatives Committee Findings**

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## Environmental Initiatives Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Environmental Initiatives** is to make the Secretary of State’s Office one the most sustainable in the country and use the Secretary of State’s platform to drive innovation and adoption of environmentally friendly practices across the state.

Success in this area would look like reduced total carbon emissions across Illinois, increased Secretary of State-related building energy efficiency, increased electrification of fleet vehicles, and more awareness campaigns that drive Illinois residents to reduce waste.

In reviewing public comments and in our discussions, The Environmental Initiatives Committee identified many common themes, summarized in the table below.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Need more data to inform sustainability efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Secretary of State's Office needs to have better data collection and information"</li> <li>▪ "There's a short-term need to collect data on how fleets are being used"</li> <li>▪ "To drive electrification strategy, need inventory of fleet and what you need them to do, which requires data collection"</li> <li>▪ "The Office needs to conduct an energy audit to understand current practices"</li> <li>▪ "We need to collect data on vehicle miles traveled per year to better inform and sustain transportation funding"</li> </ul>
Desire to improve internal operations to reduce Secretary of State emissions and waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Energy conservation metrics should be included in operation and maintenance service contracts"</li> <li>▪ "E-waste is a critical factor to consider and there needs to be updates to computer equipment and data centers to reduce energy consumption"</li> <li>▪ "How is trash currently being disposed of? Garbage should be disposed of through waste-to-energy plants"</li> <li>▪ "Secretary of State needs to improve building efficiency by optimizing HVAC systems, using smart metering and other technologies"</li> <li>▪ "The Capitol Complex is supplied by a coal power plant but needs to be shut down sooner"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to expand employee and public awareness of environmental topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "No other entity communicates with drivers more than the Secretary of State"</li> <li>▪ "There's a great opportunity to leverage the libraries to educate students on carbon reduction strategies and environmental justice"</li> <li>▪ "The Secretary of State should educate and incentivize drivers given its broad footprint across 138 driver facilities"</li> </ul>



Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Schools should play a role in educating students on green initiatives, practices, and workforce opportunities"</li> <li>▪ "Educate the public on electric vehicle (EV) policy developments such as EV rebates, particularly for low-income drivers"</li> <li>▪ "How can we educate and motivate employees to live and breathe sustainability efforts in their everyday lives?"</li> </ul>
Desire to multiply Secretary of State's environmental impact beyond the agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Contractors should have to spell out how construction/demolition is sustainable; environmental stewardship should be a KPI in contract selection"</li> <li>▪ "Two fleets that need to be electrified – school buses and postal service vehicles; both could be re-powered"</li> <li>▪ "Secretary of State is responsible for driver safety broadly and thus can impact entire state government vehicle fleet"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to leverage Secretary of State assets to test and pilot new ventures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Electrified fleets could be used bi-directionally to service the energy grid"</li> <li>▪ "We should prove out the concept of a Virtual Power Plant to provide grid security through two-way grid interaction and pilot programs in underserved communities"</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Environmental Initiatives Committee included:

- Set vision and goals; use data to baseline current practices and track progress against key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Reduce environmental footprint by driving efficiencies and reducing waste in Secretary of State facilities management
- Leverage Secretary of State facilities to educate public about environmental initiatives and drive behavior changes
- Broaden impact through procurement, advocacy, and government engagement at all levels
- Use Secretary of State assets to test new business models and drive innovative technology adoption



To address these opportunities, the Environmental Initiatives Committee proposed enacting the following strategies.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Set vision and goals; use data to baseline current practices and track progress against KPIs <sup>18</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish an environmental vision statement for the agency</li> <li>Set goals and KPIs</li> <li>Begin baseline of operations to understand building systems, processes, energy consumption, fleets, waste across the Secretary of State’s footprint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish an annual report that tracks progress against ongoing efforts</li> <li>Conduct emission, waste, and energy audits</li> </ul>
Reduce environmental footprint by driving efficiencies and reducing waste in Secretary of State facilities management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin implementation of recycling and waste diversion programs</li> <li>Leverage cloud services for document management to reduce paper consumption</li> <li>Purchase recycled paper and other reused goods</li> <li>Eliminate Styrofoam and plastics from cafeterias</li> <li>Plant more trees on Capitol grounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upgrade/optimize computer and data center equipment to reduce energy consumption</li> <li>Procure technology (smart meters and chilled water) to improve building efficiency</li> <li>Install chargers (e.g., L1 and L2) at Secretary of State facilities</li> <li>Begin to engage utilities (e.g., Ameren Illinois) to shift electricity consumption within the Capital Complex to renewables through virtual power purchase agreements or other means</li> </ul>
Leverage Secretary of State facilities to educate the public about environmental initiatives and drive behavior changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define public engagement and communications strategy</li> <li>Add free tire air pumps at Secretary of State driver facilities</li> <li>Add sustainability-themed books to the Illinois Reads program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create programs with schools/libraries to educate students about green initiatives, challenges, and workforce opportunities (e.g., climate and sustainability month)</li> <li>Create driver education materials and define appropriate communications channels</li> <li>Develop incentives to align driver behavior with environmental goals</li> </ul>





Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create programs for Secretary of State employees to engage, educate, and incentivize more sustainable practices</li> <li>▪ Allow people to purchase carbon offsets through Secretary of State</li> </ul>
Broaden impact through procurement, advocacy, and government engagement at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add sustainability KPIs to future vendor contracts and awards</li> <li>▪ Create strategy to electrify Secretary of State vehicle fleet</li> <li>▪ Support measures to boost transportation infrastructure funding and drive electric vehicle adoption</li> <li>▪ Engage other agencies to electrify school buses, postal vehicles, and other outside fleets</li> <li>▪ Engage municipalities and major IL employers on partnership and collaboration opportunities to drive greater impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add sustainability KPIs to future vendor contracts and awards</li> <li>▪ Create strategy to electrify Secretary of State vehicle fleet</li> <li>▪ Support measures to boost transportation infrastructure funding and drive electric vehicle adoption</li> <li>▪ Engage other agencies to electrify school buses, postal vehicles, and other outside fleets</li> <li>▪ Engage municipalities and major IL employers on partnership and collaboration opportunities to drive greater impact</li> </ul>
Use Secretary of State assets to test new business models and drive innovative technology adoption		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aggregate electrified fleets to test virtual power plant and bi-directional grid interaction</li> <li>▪ Engage utility companies to pilot demand response program, time-of-use rates for electric vehicles</li> </ul>



# **Organ and Tissue Donations Committee Findings**

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## Organ and Tissue Donations Committee Findings

Our committee’s vision for **Organ and Tissue Donations** is to find a match for every Illinoisan who needs one by increasing registered donors, particularly among communities where the largest disparities exist.

If successful, this would mean an increase in registration rates, more diverse registered donors, and an increase in donation matches.

Based on our meetings and public input, the Organ and Tissue Donations Committee identified the following challenges and opportunities.

Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
Deficit of matches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "I hope you have time to look over this issue because I need a heart"</li> <li>▪ "I want to live; I have a lot to do – do you have a plan for organ donations?"</li> </ul>
Unrepresentative organ and tissue donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 28% of transplant waitlist is Black, while only 15% of donors are</li> <li>▪ "Consider parallels between what IDPH did with COVID vaccines and minorities' participation educationally, what they did to educate people who were vaccine hesitant"</li> </ul>
Opportunity to expand donor registration access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "We are doing automatic voter registration - is this a possibility to link in?"</li> <li>▪ "I know some states are looking at putting the question of donor registry on income tax form"</li> <li>▪ "When people renew driver's licenses, the form should ask 'would you like to be a donor' with a reason"</li> </ul>
Demand for powerful technologies, efficiencies, and consistencies across locations/experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Is our current login system at peak efficiency to make it easy for people to register quickly?"</li> <li>▪ "Making it easier for residents to sign up online"</li> </ul>
Expand training initiatives for employees involved in donor registration and education (e.g., DMV and libraries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Training for those in the front lines asking if someone wants to join registry - giving them the research, the education, so they are better equipped to ask that question"</li> <li>▪ "Making sure the individual across the counter from you feels like you know what you're talking about is going to help them feel comfortable in making that decision to register"</li> </ul>
Demand for improved marketing and donor education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "It's a shame that not everyone understands how helpful and useful, how life-saving they can be by donating an organ"</li> <li>▪ "Educate our communities, especially within minorities"</li> </ul>



Challenge / Opportunity	What We Heard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ "Clubs and community groups need speakers - develop a volunteer speakers' bureau on donation"</li> <li>▪ "An understanding of what you or your family member is signing for, and the follow-up after you make that decision is important. Both are areas where you can make improvements"</li> <li>▪ "I think there are a lot of resources there to promote organ donation through our libraries"</li> </ul>

**Recommendations:**

Specific recommendations from the Organ and Tissue Donations Committee included:

- Streamline and automate processes to ease registration
- Increase donor registration points to expand diverse donor network
- Train Secretary of State staff on organ and tissue donation to share knowledge with public
- Improve donation collection and delivery processes to drive efficiencies and save lives
- Utilize Secretary of State platforms to spread awareness and educate on registration and donation
- Leverage trusted community networks to support awareness and education
- Follow up regularly with registered donors to maintain knowledge of and commitment to organ donation

To address these opportunities, the Organ and Tissue Donations Committee proposed enacting the following strategies.

Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Streamline and automate processes to ease registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explore best-in-class solutions from other states and municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Borrow effective measures from other Secretary of State functions (e.g., voter registration)</li> <li>▪ Customize solution and implement</li> </ul>
Increase donor registration points to expand diverse donor network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify feasible donor registration points (e.g., tax forms, marriage, fishing license, Armed Forces enlistment, insurance, healthcare, and public pension retirement decision points)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support legislation to integrate donor registration into identified potential points</li> <li>▪ Explore including Secretary of State kiosks with donor registration system in Secretary of State facilities</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
Train Secretary of State staff on organ and tissue donation to share knowledge with the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore how Secretary of State staff (e.g., drivers' facilities and library personnel) has historically been engaged in organ donation education, understanding what is effective and what is not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise training curriculums and establish regular training cycles (e.g., registration processes, what it means to be a donor, or how to combat misinformation)</li> <li>Advocate for organ and tissue donation advocacy groups to be able to connect with DMV staff (currently not allowed)</li> </ul>
Improve donation collection and delivery processes to drive efficiencies and save lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore eliminating Secretary of State donor registration validation requirement at procurement</li> <li>Examine call centers and determine further areas for improved efficiencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action best-practices</li> <li>Work with coroner and medical offices to improve tissue donation identification and procurement procedures</li> </ul>
Utilize Secretary of State platforms to spread awareness and educate on registration and donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand largest challenges and concerns regarding registration and donation (e.g., host focus groups and interview subject matter experts)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile marketing and education materials and post at Secretary of State facilities</li> <li>Build collection of donor education resources at libraries and online</li> <li>Support legislation to review organ donation license plate fund</li> </ul>
Leverage trusted community networks to support awareness and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for public data points on number of registered donors, racial and sex disparities (DMV currently does not publish these) to identify communities to focus outreach</li> <li>Identify state/community leaders and networks (e.g., elected officials, first responders, organ donation recipients, unions, and church groups) to amplify message</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use behavioral psychology principles to identify and implement creative measures to drive signups among hesitant populations</li> <li>Regularly circulate marketing and donor education materials, working with leaders and networks to tailor messaging to communities</li> <li>Develop volunteer speakers' bureau including donation recipients</li> <li>Support minority donor campaigns (e.g., August is national minority donor a month)</li> </ul>
Follow up regularly with registered donors to maintain knowledge of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore best practices for outreach to registered donors (e.g., mail, email, and text)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regularly update materials to circulate in follow-ups and maintain frequent outreach</li> </ul>



Potential strategy	Short-term actions	Long-term actions
and commitment to organ donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Set follow-up outreach strategy and cadence</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Encourage registered donors to be registration ambassadors (e.g., discuss their registration and wishes with family and friends)</li></ul>



## Conclusion

We set a high bar. To get there, we will continue to need your input and honest feedback. By listening to you, partnering together, and collaborating on the path forward, we can make our shared visions a reality. Please stay tuned for additional ways to engage with us, including social media, the Office’s website, town halls, and future listening tours. We want to hear from you.

## Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the transition team’s hard work, the leadership of our committee chairs, collaboration from committee members and the diverse perspectives they brought, enthusiasm from Office personnel, and – most importantly – Illinois voters. Thank you all for joining me as we begin to RevUp Illinois!

For a detailed list of **committee members by topic**, please see the section titled, “**Meet the Transition Team.**”



## Meet the Transition Team

Committee	Chair and Members
<b>Driver Facilities &amp; Road Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Bob Morgan, State Representative, 58th District (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Dan Brady, State Representative, 105th District</li> <li>▪ Brad Cole, Executive Director, Illinois Municipal League</li> <li>▪ Tim Drea, President, Illinois AFL-CIO</li> <li>▪ J.P. Fyans, General Counsel, President of Executive Board, Teamsters Local 916</li> <li>▪ Christa Hamilton, President and CEO, UCAN</li> <li>▪ Terrence J. Hancock, President, Teamsters Joint Council 25 and Local 731</li> <li>▪ Randy Harris, Director, Midwest Region LiUNA</li> <li>▪ Joe Healy, Secretary-Treasurer, Laborers’ District Council of Chicago</li> <li>▪ Barbara Hernandez, State Representative, 83rd District</li> <li>▪ Jay Hoffman, State Representative, 113th District</li> <li>▪ Doug House, Former Chair, Democratic Chairs Association; Former Dept. Secretary IDOT</li> <li>▪ Bob Loquercio, CEO and President, Bob Loquercio Auto Group</li> <li>▪ Joe McMahon, Executive Director, Illinois Automobile Dealers Association</li> <li>▪ Dian Palmer, President, SEIU 73</li> <li>▪ Marc Poulos, Executive Director, IUOE Local 150</li> <li>▪ Amy Rynell, Executive Director, Active Trans Alliance</li> <li>▪ Ram Villivalam, State Senator, 8th District</li> </ul>
<b>Ethics &amp; Office Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Sheila Simon, Former Lt. Governor, State of Illinois (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Cristina Castro, State Senator, 22nd District</li> <li>▪ Abe Scarr, Director, Illinois PIRG</li> <li>▪ Gina DeCiani, General Counsel Vice President, HR, Assoc for Supply Chain Management</li> <li>▪ Marcus C. Evans Jr., State Representative 33rd District</li> <li>▪ Edgar Gonzalez Jr., State Representative, 21st District</li> <li>▪ Verneé Green, Chief Executive Officer, Mikva Challenge</li> <li>▪ Jeff Jacob, Estate Trust Officer/Deputy General Counsel, Office of the Special Deputy</li> <li>▪ Rick Jасulca, Chairman, Jасulca Terman, Strategic Communications</li> <li>▪ Calvin Jordan, Supervisor, Rich Township</li> <li>▪ Michael Phelon, Founder and CEO, The Outlet</li> <li>▪ Karen Tamley, President and CEO, Access Living</li> <li>▪ Angel L Torres, Jr., Owner and Founder, Veteran Engagement and Solutions LLC</li> <li>▪ Abby Witt, Former Executive Director, Democratic Party of Illinois</li> </ul>





Committee	Chair and Members
<b>Library Enhancements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Heidi Smith, Executive Director, Highland Park Library (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Chris M. Brown, Commissioner, Chicago Public Library</li> <li>▪ Patrick Corcoran, Policy Director, Illinois Office of the Comptroller</li> <li>▪ Eira Corral-Sepulveda, Commissioner, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District</li> <li>▪ Karen Danczak Lyons, Former Director, Evanston Library</li> <li>▪ Will Davis, State Representative, 30th District</li> <li>▪ Ruth E. Faklis, Director of the Prairie Trails Public Library District, Burbank</li> <li>▪ LaToya Greenwood, State Representative, 114th District</li> <li>▪ Kathryn Harris, Board of Trustee, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum</li> <li>▪ Dan Montgomery, President, Illinois Federation of Teachers</li> <li>▪ Andie Townhouse, Librarian, Roberto Clemente High School</li> <li>▪ Tamara Townsend, Dept. Chairperson, Librarian, CCC – Malcolm X College</li> <li>▪ Walter Turner, Reverend, New Spiritual Light Baptist Missionary Church</li> <li>▪ Lori Wilcox, City Clerk, Chicago Heights</li> <li>▪ Bridget Lamont, Former Director of IL State Library, Former Vice Chair of U.S. National Commission on Libraries</li> </ul>
<b>Securities Division Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>John Simpson, Partner, Broadhaven Capital (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Jaqueline Avitia-Guzman, VP of Corporate Development and Finance, Transform Holdings</li> <li>▪ Michael Cabonargi, Commissioner, Cook County Board of Review</li> <li>▪ Calen Campanella, Partner, Campanella and Campanella, Brothers at Law</li> <li>▪ Adela Cepeda, Chair, Angeles Investors</li> <li>▪ Nicholas Cioromski, Owner, Cioromski Law, LLC; Board Member, Copernicus Center</li> <li>▪ Kevin Connor, General Counsel, Chicago Civilian Office of Police Accountability</li> <li>▪ Jim Malinowski, Principal, Guardian Security Services</li> <li>▪ Neli Vasquez-Rowland, Co-Founder and President, A Safe Haven Foundation</li> <li>▪ John Simmons, Partner, Simmons Firm</li> <li>▪ Eddie Winters, Former Police Chief Chicago Police Department</li> </ul>
<b>Voter Rights &amp; Registration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Carol Ronen, Former State Representative (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Brent Adams, Senior Vice President of Policy and Communication, Woodstock Institute</li> <li>▪ Allison Benway-Maloney, Corporate Counsel and Compliance Officer, F.H. Paschen</li> <li>▪ Lakesia Collins, State Representative, 9th District</li> <li>▪ Marcus C. Evans Jr., State Representative, 33rd District</li> <li>▪ Lauren Beth Gash, Chair, Lake County Democrats</li> <li>▪ Laura Hepp-Kessel, Director of Telehealth Services, SIU Medicine</li> </ul>



# ALEXI GIANNOULIAS • SECRETARY OF STATE

## Transition Report – Conclusion and Acknowledgments

Committee	Chair and Members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Luis Gutierrez, former U.S. Representative, 4th District, Founder and CEO, Our Nation’s Future</li> <li>▪ Christa Hamilton, President and CEO, UCAN Chicago</li> <li>▪ James Meeks, Pastor, Salem Baptist Church</li> <li>▪ Bobby Rush, Congressman, 1st District, U.S. House of Representatives</li> <li>▪ Katie Stuart, State Representative, 112th District</li> <li>▪ Silvana Tabares, Alderwoman, 23rd Ward</li> <li>▪ Kristina Zahorik, President, and Trustee ILDCCA, Village of Oakwood Hills</li> <li>▪ Don Gray, County Clerk, Sangamon County and Assessor, Capital Township</li> </ul>
<b>Technology Enhancements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Howard Tullman, Partner and Former CEO, G2T3V, Chicago High Tech Investment Partners, 1871 (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Dr. Kathleen St. Louis Caliento, President and CEO, Cara Collective</li> <li>▪ Justin DeJong, Vice President of Enterprise Communications, American Medical Association</li> <li>▪ Daniel Egel-Weiss, Counsel, State Government Relations and Regulatory Compliance, MLB</li> <li>▪ Tarek Fadel, Former CEO, Independent Entrepreneur</li> <li>▪ Matthew Gagerman, CEO, Checkchangers</li> <li>▪ Justin Horwitz, Founder and Executive Director, Really American</li> <li>▪ Mayra Kahn, Founder, and CEO, Teamficient</li> <li>▪ Holly Kim, Treasurer, Lake County</li> <li>▪ David Namkung, Partner, Kinzie Capital Partners</li> <li>▪ Robert Rupp, Executive Director, Dupage County Bar Association</li> <li>▪ Angel L. Torres, Jr., Owner &amp; Founder, Veteran Engagement and Solutions LLC</li> <li>▪ Endy Zemenides, Executive Director, HALC</li> </ul>
<b>Business Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Letty Velez, CEO, Velez Global Enterprises (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Rush Darwish, President, Arab American Business and Professional Association</li> <li>▪ Dr. Byron T. Brazier, Bishop, Apostolic Church of God</li> <li>▪ Lynn Karner, Executive Director, Illinois Pipe Trades Association</li> <li>▪ Pat Kelly, President, and Business Manager, IUOE Local 399</li> <li>▪ Vivian Khalaf, Partner, Khalaf &amp; Abuzir, LLC</li> <li>▪ Sam Ma, Founder and Honorary Chair, American and Asian Association; Owner, B.B.Q King</li> <li>▪ Tom McNamara, Mayor, City of Rockford</li> <li>▪ John Penn, LIUNA Midwest</li> <li>▪ Mike Rodriguez, Alderman 22nd Ward, City of Chicago</li> <li>▪ Bill Thanoukos, Owner Greek Kitchen, LLC</li> <li>▪ Steve Powell, President, UFCW Local 881</li> <li>▪ Aundra Williams, Bureau Chief of Business Services, IDOT</li> <li>▪ Matthew Pritzker, founder, and CEO of the Matthew Pritzker Company</li> <li>▪ Mohammed Siddiqui, Principal Owner, Studio Elite</li> </ul>



Committee	Chair and Members
<b>Environmental Initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Jennifer Walling, Executive Director, Illinois Environmental Council, (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Dr. Rita Ali, Mayor, City of Peoria</li> <li>▪ Martin Roth Cohen, Owner Martin Roth Cohen &amp; Associates</li> <li>▪ Jack Darin, Director, Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter</li> <li>▪ George T. Drost, Partner, Drost Kivlahan McMahon &amp; O'Connor, LLC</li> <li>▪ Michael Joyce, Commodities Trader</li> <li>▪ Mo Khan, Senior Director, Special Olympics Illinois</li> <li>▪ Yangsu Kim, Chief Counsel, IDOT</li> <li>▪ Mike Menyhart, President of the Americas and Chief Strategy Officer, SEA Electric</li> <li>▪ Maggie O'Keefe, Democratic Committeewoman, 40th Ward</li> <li>▪ Mary Oshana, Commissioner, Skokie Park District</li> <li>▪ Ann Williams, State Representative, 11th District</li> </ul>
<b>Organ &amp; Tissue Donations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Dan Brady, State Representative, 105th District (Committee Chair)</b></li> <li>▪ Ryan Anderson, Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, Painters District Council 30</li> <li>▪ Hon. Mary Patricia Burns, President and Founding Partner, Burke, Burns &amp; Pinelli, Ltd., Court of Claims</li> <li>▪ Sheila Chalmers, President, Village of Matteson</li> <li>▪ Pamela Davidson, State Central Committeewoman, 17th Congressional District</li> <li>▪ Robin Kelly, Congresswoman, 2nd District</li> <li>▪ Sangeetha Rayapati, Mayor, City of Moline</li> <li>▪ Charles Scholz, Former Mayor, City of Quincy</li> <li>▪ John Webb, Former Legislative Affairs Director, IDFPR</li> </ul>

# Growing Our Agricultural Economy

## Aspiration: A thriving agricultural and rural economy

Illinois has a unique opportunity to position itself as a national leader in agriculture and rural development. The new administration should ensure Illinois' agriculture industry and rural economy are thriving and that farmers and rural Illinoisans, who make up a large portion of the state, are not left out and left behind when it comes to policy decisions that affect them. There are rural and urban opportunities for growth in the food and agricultural economy, and efforts are underway to bridge and integrate those opportunities. The state should leverage existing resources and build upon current efforts.

In order to thrive as a state, Illinois must maintain its major footprint in agriculture, agribusiness, and food. The state should prioritize infrastructure improvements and invest in agriculture education. The new administration should be an advocate for Illinois' urban and rural communities, foster innovation across the state, and maintain a business climate that is friendly to farmers and the agriculture industry.

## Illinois today: An industry without a roadmap

Illinois' large economy was built on agriculture. Our state is first in the nation for soybean production, second for corn production,<sup>i</sup> and the food and fiber industry employs nearly one million Illinoisans.<sup>ii</sup> There are over 72,000 farms in Illinois, and farmland covers about 75 percent of the state's total land area.<sup>iii</sup> Marketing of Illinois' agricultural commodities generates more than \$19 billion annually, and Illinois' county fairs are engines that bring in more than \$170 million of economic activity annually.<sup>iv</sup> The food processing and manufacturing cluster in Illinois is the second largest in the nation by employment, and first in the nation in processed food sales.<sup>v</sup> Livestock farms generate billions in economic activity for Illinois, and Mexico and Canada are top markets for the state's commodities exports.<sup>vi</sup> Illinois has a central transportation network and logistical shipping advantages with an inland waterway system, highways, and rail. We have the ability to fill large purchases in bulk from small containers to trucks to any destination in the world.

Small businesses and educational institutions across the state are redefining the food and agricultural economy. There are 200 craft breweries in Illinois<sup>vii</sup>, and there are opportunities for new markets like hops farming and fermentation-related businesses. Additionally, Illinois has the ability to educate the next generation of farmers and agricultural workers. Colleges and universities are researching new technologies for producing fuel ethanol, and high schools are offering opportunities for students in urban and rural areas to study agriculture. There are agriculture educational programs that reach every county in Illinois.

Farmers in urban communities across the state are producing specialty crops, training low-income people of color on how to farm, making food more accessible, and developing green stormwater infrastructure. Illinoisans are creatively expanding agriculture and innovating around new crops. The legalization of hemp will allow local farmers to grow hemp and the state to compete for hemp acreage on a national scale.<sup>viii</sup> Illinois' colleges and universities are vital partners in innovation and research, with programs that research and plant alternative and new crops. Legalization of cannabis presents opportunities for producers in rural and urban

communities to expand what they grow.

Despite Illinois' great strengths, an absence of vision and agricultural leadership has left the state without a roadmap. The budget crisis caused cuts to the Illinois Department of Agriculture's operations, promotions, and export marketing<sup>ix</sup> and to agriculture education at colleges and universities across the state, negatively impacting the education programs that support students who want to enter the field of agriculture. County fairs are in desperate need of infrastructure upgrades for fairgrounds.

Additionally, the roads and port districts that farmers rely on to get their products from farm to market need to be upgraded, but Illinois has not had a major capital bill since 2009. An absence of widely available broadband prevents producers from fully utilizing agriculture technology, rural schools from providing optimal education, and the state from retaining businesses and employees outside of Chicago. Food insecurity threatens the health and wellbeing of Illinoisans, and the Trump Administration is waging trade wars that are hurting Illinois farmers.<sup>x</sup>

## Principles for agriculture projects

The new administration has an opportunity to advocate for one of the state's largest industries, educate the next generation of farmers, rebuild the state's infrastructure, innovate around agriculture and rural development, and provide regulatory functions that benefit the industry.

The Growing our Agricultural Economy Transition Committee offers key recommendations across five critical areas: marketing, agriculture education, infrastructure and rural development, innovation and market expansion, and taxes and regulations.

### Theme 1: Market and promote agriculture

The new administration should be a cheerleader for one of the state's leading industries. The state should better market and promote Illinois agricultural products and commodities and strengthen the agencies that represent the state's agriculture industry. Specific recommendations include:

#### Strengthen the Illinois Department of Agriculture

The new administration should fully fund the Illinois Department of Agriculture so that it can increase capacity, perform its duties, and develop a roadmap for agriculture and agribusiness goals.

#### Foster collaboration between IDOA and DCEO

The state should foster collaboration between the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity on projects that grow the agricultural economy. These agencies can work with existing agribusinesses across Illinois to leverage connections with up- and downstream vendors, suppliers, and customers. They can also utilize the 80 foreign trade offices in Chicago and lead trade missions to build international networks that encourage the purchase of Illinois agricultural products globally.

#### Advocate for the agriculture industry

The governor and IDOA should be stronger advocates to both the federal government and international networks to increase credibility for the agriculture industry at large. The state should promote the state's agribusinesses from a lens of the economic value that agriculture provides to the state and the opportunities Illinois offers for international business expansion.

The state should encourage new market creation for Illinois products and work with international offices to promote those products.

Near-term actions the state could consider include:

- Support the State of Illinois office in Washington, D.C. so that it can advocate for Illinois' agriculture industry and rural communities.
- Encourage DCEO to focus on traditional grain and livestock promotion as part of their initiatives and have a stronger recruitment role to grow the agriculture business environment in Illinois.
- Ensure strong state agricultural representation on federal commissions, such as the Governors' Biofuels Coalition, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, and National Association of State Energy Officials.
- Create a Foreign Animal Disease task force so the state can proactively prepare for foreign animal diseases that could enter our state.

## Theme 2: Invest in agricultural education

The new administration should expand investments in agricultural education and incentivize Illinois students to work in agriculture. The new administration should redefine agriculture education as a critical area that encompasses food, agriculture, science, and leadership education. The state should incentivize and prepare educated young people to pursue careers in these areas and become the next generation of entrepreneurs, farmers, storeowners, and workers through the following recommendations:

### Create a job-ready workforce development strategy

Comprehensive labor is in demand across the state, and the new administration should set forth a job-ready workforce development strategy that covers undergraduate and graduate education, youth development, agriculture science, and leadership education.

### Advance vocational training in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The state should advance vocational training in the 21st Century by incentivizing new curriculums that are rooted in unique skills and trade certifications, such as computer sciences, auto mechanics, carpentry, and HVAC installation. These opportunities offer students an alternative path to college and viable, successful, good-paying careers. The state could encourage school districts to coordinate with local community colleges on vocational training programs.

### Expand the University of Illinois' Extension program

The state should leverage the University of Illinois' Extension program as a vehicle for strengthening rural economies across the state. The program can strategically balance rural and metropolitan needs, draw on traditional strengths, incentivize creative innovation and entrepreneurship, and align interests for positive collaborative impact.

### Increase opportunities for young farmers

Young farmers in rural and urban areas face challenges in getting capital to start a farm. The state should provide new opportunities, via programs or grants, for young farmers in traditional agricultural roles or in new urban ventures. The state could consider expanding existing programs and should fully enforce the new law that allows local governments to incentivize farmers in urban agriculture zones.

### Theme 3: Improve infrastructure and develop rural areas

The state should improve the infrastructure and rural economy upon which the state's agriculture industry relies. In order to ensure Illinois is setting up farmers and rural Illinoisans for success, the state should consider these recommendations:

#### Improve state infrastructure and expand broadband

The new administration should lead the effort to improve state infrastructure through a capital plan that takes into account the needs of state waterways, climate resiliency, and preventing the loss of farmland property value. The new administration could encourage the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to upgrade lock and dam facilities on major waterways. The state should also improve farm-to-market infrastructure by upgrading rural roads and bridges that farmers rely on to move their products to market, and could work with rural drainage districts to improve field drainage and handle rural road flooding during harvest and planting periods.

Additionally, the state should find ways to expand broadband to rural residents across Illinois, prioritizing farmers, schools, and small businesses. The state should leverage existing broadband corridors and rural electric cooperative infrastructure and should consider ways to honor private property rights throughout the expansion process. The state could also convene a coalition of businesses, local governments, schools, and hospitals to determine upload and download speeds and identify gaps in access across the state.

#### Create a rural innovation fund

The new administration should partner with colleges and public universities to create an innovation fund that would allow Illinois' 62 non-metropolitan counties to develop, pilot, and test new interdisciplinary, targeted, and flexible models that could be scaled on a statewide level. The program should be multi-disciplinary and leverage government, organizational, and academic sectors.

### Theme 4: Promote a culture of innovation and expand markets

Illinois should leverage advances within and outside the existing agricultural and food ecosystem. In order to ensure the state is innovating around agriculture and rural development, it should consider these recommendations:

#### Ensure farmers are partners in the cannabis legalization process

As the state looks toward the legalization of cannabis, it should ensure Illinois farmers are a partner in the process. Initially, the state could lead an effort to compete for hemp acreage on a national scale. The new administration should prioritize the revision and approval of Illinois Industrial Hemp Rules so that farmers can confirm their spring planting intentions, register with IDOA, and purchase equipment. The new administration should also prioritize consumer safety while legalizing cannabis and scale up the current Illinois Medical Marijuana regulatory structure for recreational use.

#### Expand urban agriculture across the state

The state should expand urban agriculture across the state to address food deserts. It could establish a healthy food development program to expand access to healthy foods in eligible areas, eliminate food deserts, and create jobs and businesses in struggling areas of the state. It could also consider creating a program to assist new urban or rural farmers or farmers wishing to learn to grow another crop, especially food or medicine, in learning to do so while connecting and exposing them to new markets, capital, and technical assistance. The state should also implement the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) in a way that ensures black and brown

communities are able to compete to provide safety compliance and should ensure Illinois takes advantage of U.S. Food and Drug Administration funding for FSMA.

#### Accelerate the development of new technologies and expand into new markets

The state should develop an integrated, statewide, public-private strategy to accelerate the development of new technologies, address consumer expectations, and expand into new markets. The state could establish a group, comprised of production groups, agribusinesses, and higher education institutions, to recommend a farm-to-market development plan that addresses the changing preferences of consumers. It could also consider creating a chemical and bioproduct production incentive program for new chemicals and processes based on Illinois agricultural products, like corn and soybeans.

Near-term actions the state could consider include:

- Charge IDOA with centralizing existing recommendations from stakeholders to determine best practices for the agricultural industry.

#### Theme 5: Maintain and improve taxes and regulations that support agriculture

The state should maintain fair taxation and provide regulatory functions that benefit farmers, consumers, and agricultural industries. The state should consider these recommendations:

##### Maintain fair and equitable property taxation for farmers

Farmers are economic drivers, and the state should create a supportive business climate for producers to maintain their competitiveness in the state. Specifically, the state should maintain the Illinois Farmland Assessment Act, protect sales tax incentives for agricultural inputs and equipment, and maintain a balanced process for siting livestock farms through the Livestock Management Facilities Act.

Near-Term Actions:

- The committee recommends that the new administration support a sales tax credit for ethanol fuel blends greater than 10 percent, but less than 50 percent, like E15.

### Conclusion: Guiding Illinois' agricultural economy toward success and modernization

The state should begin to redefine agriculture across education, new markets, and rural development. In order for the industry to thrive, the state should support agriculture innovation and better promote the industry as a whole. Key recommendations include:

- Market and promote Illinois' agricultural products and commodities and strengthen the agencies that represent the state's agriculture industry.
- Invest in agriculture education and incentivize Illinois students to work in agriculture.
- Improve the infrastructure and rural economy upon which the state's agriculture industry relies.
- Promote a culture of innovation and expand agricultural markets in the state.
- Maintain and improve taxes and regulations that support farmers and the agriculture industry.

If Illinois can strengthen and expand its number one industry, it can be a national leader and maintain its footprint in agriculture, agribusiness, and food.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://wrex.com/category/2018/12/30/illinois-farmers-hope-for-trade-tensions-to-ease-in-2019/>



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- <sup>ii</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/About/Pages/Facts-About-Illinois-Agriculture.aspx>
- <sup>iii</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/About/Pages/Facts-About-Illinois-Agriculture.aspx>
- <sup>iv</sup> <https://www.sj-r.com/article/20150213/NEWS/150219757>
- <sup>v</sup> <https://www.industryweek.com/education-training/food-manufacturing-chicago-gets-boost>
- <sup>vi</sup> <https://www.sj-r.com/news/20181223/for-illinois-farmers-record-harvests---and-uncertainty>
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/by-state/?state=IL>
- <sup>viii</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-hemp-legalized-in-illinois-20181226-story.html>
- <sup>ix</sup> <https://farmweeknow.com/story-state-budget-cuts-impact-ag-programs-3-166626>
- <sup>x</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-steel-agriculture/trade-war-backfire-steel-tariff-shrapnel-hits-u-s-farmers-idUSKBN1HK0GV>

# Budget & Innovation

## Aspiration: providing Illinois residents with a more stable and prosperous future

The state of Illinois and its residents deserve a stronger fiscal situation and stable future. Years of a lack of strategic direction and failed leadership have put Illinois in a situation where a quick fix is not possible. However, this administration should take the opportunity to adopt a balanced approach, leaving behind the partisan battles of the past four years, and focusing on discipline and pragmatism to help build fiscal stability in the short-term and put the state on the path to a better financial future.

To begin, this administration should strive to balance the budget while accounting for and providing all necessary services to the residents of Illinois. In the short term, state leaders should return to working together across the political spectrum and passing balanced budgets that both invest adequately in current services, and reduce the state's long term accumulated deficit. At the same time, the state needs to think long-term about addressing the growing pension and debt challenges. While any one solution won't fix all of Illinois' fiscal challenges overnight, this administration can start laying the foundation by taking critical steps that will put Illinois on the path toward long-term fiscal stability. This administration will need to be innovative and not shy away from difficult decisions. Effective strategies that are new and innovative as well as tried and true will be needed to solve Illinois' structural fiscal problems.

## Illinois Today: Significant fiscal challenges

The state of Illinois faces significant long- and short-term financial challenges that will take years to put behind us. In the short-term, the state must address its significant balance of unpaid bills caused in part by the previous administration's unprecedented 736-day budget impasse. Illinois' failure to pass a budget for fiscal years 2016 and 2017 led the state's backlog of unpaid bills to reach historic heights – exceeding \$16.6 billion in November 2017<sup>1</sup> and with staggering amounts remaining. The Illinois Office of the Comptroller estimated that 7.9 billion in unpaid bills remain.<sup>2</sup> The state also has an additional \$5.5 billion in backlog borrowing, \$650 million in interfund borrowing and \$500 million in estimated backpay for state workers.

Years of underfunding the state's long-term liabilities has led to severely underfunded pension plans, which in turn has negatively impacted the state's bond ratings. With a collective funded ratio of approximately 39.8 percent, Illinois' five pension funds are in a critical state and are among the most poorly funded pension funds in the nation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, unfunded liabilities continue to grow due to recent actuarial adjustments, change in forecasted investment returns, and insufficient state contributions. Already, the state's creditworthiness has been affected (downgraded to Baa3 in mid-2017 as a direct result of the budget impasse and growing pension

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<sup>1</sup> Illinois Comptroller's Office, Backlog Voucher Report (<https://illinoiscomptroller.gov/financial-data/backlog-voucher-report-bvr/>)

<sup>2</sup> <https://illinoiscomptroller.gov/comptroller/assets/file/DTA/current/DTARreport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/fiscal-stability/long-term>

debt, but holding steady in 2018),<sup>4</sup> making it more expensive to borrow money to both pay down the pension debt and make other critical investments.

An examination of state revenue sources and spending highlights a range of opportunities<sup>5</sup>:

- For FY19, the state projects \$38.0 billion in general fund revenues. Individual income taxes account for \$18.1 billion, or 47 percent of general fund revenues. Sales tax contributes \$8.2 billion, and the remaining revenues come from sources including corporate taxes, federal funds, fees, and gaming revenues. Over the next five years, revenues are expected to grow 1.8 percent per year.
- Total general fund expenditures are projected to be \$38.5 billion. The largest projected expenditures for FY19 are education (\$10.1 billion) and health care & human services (\$13.8 billion), which together are estimated to account for 62 percent of spending for FY19. Over the next five years, expenses are expected to grow 2.9 percent per year.

The November Governor's Office of Management and Budget review of the enacted budget for FY19 projected a deficit of approximately \$1 billion (approximately 50 percent from the budget shortfall and 50 percent from projected payments to certain members of expired collective bargaining agreements). That report showed that without intervention, this shortfall could grow in coming years to a total cumulative deficit of more than \$20 billion by 2023<sup>6</sup> (see Exhibit 1). In order to provide the services that the state's residents expect and deserve, it is necessary that structural reforms are put in place to balance the budget while achieving both short- and long-term goals.

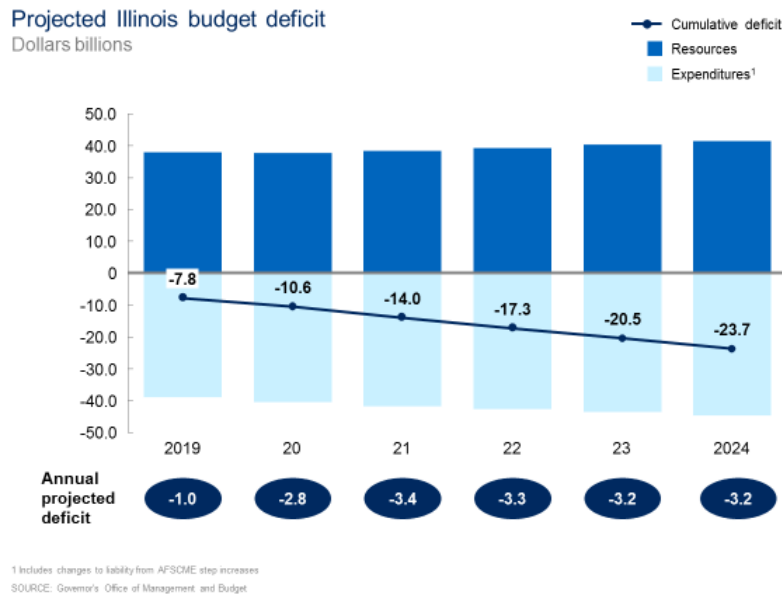
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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20170601/BLOGS02/170609991/s-p-moody-s-lower-illinois-bond-rating-to-one-level-above-junk; Moody's, July 2018> ([https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-revises-Illinois-outlook-to-stable-affirms-Baa3-GO-rating--PR\\_904656669](https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-revises-Illinois-outlook-to-stable-affirms-Baa3-GO-rating--PR_904656669))

<sup>5</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/budget/Documents/Economic%20and%20Fiscal%20Policy%20Reports/FY%202018/General-Funds-Financial-Walk-FY19.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/budget/Documents/Economic%20and%20Reports/FY%202017/Economic\\_and\\_Fiscal\\_Policy\\_Report\\_Five-Year\\_Projection\\_10.12.17.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/budget/Documents/Economic%20and%20Reports/FY%202017/Economic_and_Fiscal_Policy_Report_Five-Year_Projection_10.12.17.pdf)

## Exhibit 1



## Path forward: A holistic approach to short- and long-term budget management

We believe Illinois must pursue initiatives from three categories to address these structural budget issues and put the state on a fiscally sustainable path.

- **Increase revenue generation** including strengthening tax collection and compliance, increasing revenues from existing sources, and identifying new sources of revenue.
- **Improve expense management and efficiency** by spending state funds more strategically, decreasing the cost of procured services, enhancing the efficiency of state agencies, and increasing coordination between state and local governments.
- **Address the pension and debt challenge** by increasing the inflow of funds to the system, reshaping the pension payment curve, and improving the performance of the investment engine.

### 1) Expense management and efficiencies

As Illinois explores a range of options to achieve and maintain a balanced budget, state spending—both in how to be more strategic in spending state dollars as well as qualifying for federal matching funds—offers several levers. While capturing more revenues is an important step in closing the state's budget gap, it should be matched with improved management of state spending. Given the scale of state expenditures, significant savings can be achieved by changing how state government operates—with an emphasis on greater transparency, coordination, and operational efficiency.

## Manage spending in key categories

Procured goods and services represents a key area for improvement, and the state could implement best practices to drive down costs. Currently, mandated policies have made the procurement process inefficient. The new administration should evaluate the existing procurement process to understand its flaws in detail and implement steps for improvement. In addition, there are specific procured goods and services that could benefit from a closer analysis of spending. Overall, any changes to procurement processes should strike the right balance between ethics, efficiency, value, needs of Illinois residents, and the interests of small and minority-owned businesses to ensure inclusiveness.

Concentrating efforts on high-cost users of the health care system could offer a significant opportunity for savings. The state also has an ability to improve health care outcomes by focusing spending on preventative care and innovative delivery of service and improved care coordination. Illinois should move to empower local governments to adopt better community-based care programs that will help decrease hospitalization of people for health services. For the residents with the highest need for public health care services, the new administration should proactively educate and provide access to preventative care to reduce costs. The City of Rockford offers a compelling case study: it has identified the most frequent users of 911 EMS services and proactively provided them with support services such as scheduled preventive care appointments.

## Improve operational efficiency of state and local agencies

Private-sector organizations use management approaches, technology, and data to enable departments to work together more productively, and Illinois should seek to follow suit. Digital tools should be deployed to simplify and digitize government services and administrative processes such as time and expense reporting and payroll. Mirroring the approaches on tax compliance, Illinois could leverage advanced analytics tools internally to improve cost management and identify redundant spending. Digital tools can be used to improve Illinois residents' experience with government services by both streamlining the processes and re-designing the steps with a resident-centric perspective.

In addition to digital tools to drive efficiency, better collaboration between governmental units and agencies at the state and local levels could eliminate duplicative spending and ensure that programs are achieving the best outcomes.

## 2) Increase revenue generation

Illinois has a real opportunity to approach revenue generation in a manner which maintains Illinois' competitiveness while distributing the burden fairly among Illinois residents and businesses and positioning the state to get its fair share of funding from the federal government.

### Explore new sources of revenue

Illinois should take measures to broaden their tax base by exploring new sources of revenue. This committee believes several areas could be particularly productive. The state could levy a sales or excise tax on products and services that have traditionally been exempted in Illinois but not exempt from taxation in neighboring states. These categories include new products (e.g., e-

cigarettes, cannabis), products that carry a cost to society (e.g., plastic bags), and various services that have been traditionally exempt.

The legalization of untaxed industries — including sports betting, internet gaming, and cannabis usage — would generate additional annual revenues. New sources of revenue should be considered through both a fiscal and a fairness lens, and the state should prioritize progressive taxes that help the middle class and those striving to get there.

### Increase existing sources of revenue

Illinois is one of just eight states with a flat income tax<sup>7</sup>. Adopting a fair tax structure, where there is a variable rate structure tied to minimum income levels and increasing the tax rate for larger wage earners would increase revenue for the state and reduce the tax burden for the vast majority of Illinoisans. It would also result in a more equitable tax structure in the state and reduce some of the regressive unfairness in the tax code while keeping Illinois' tax rates competitive.

Currently, corporate income taxes contribute \$2 billion to the state each year. While many Illinois businesses pay their fair share, some companies have used profit shifting and equipment depreciation to significantly reduce their tax burden. Corporations also unfairly benefit from questionable tax rules that the state has automatically incorporated into its own tax code without any vote by the General Assembly. The state should consider new ways to improve the overall business climate in Illinois while at the same time closing unjustified tax loopholes that corporations use to minimize their tax burden.

Also, the new administration should explore ways to maximize revenue from federal match programs that exist for Housing and Urban Development, Medicaid, and Behavioral Health.

### Strengthen tax collection and compliance

Strengthening tax compliance processes could ensure that the state collects a higher percentage of funds owed by individuals and corporations. To support this priority, the state should adopt advanced analytics tools for tax administration and enforcement to better identify entities that are committing tax fraud or illegally evade their tax obligations. In the private sector, such tools have helped financial institutions to increase fraud detection significantly while enabling existing staff to cover more ground.

Further, Illinois must find ways to increase tax compliance on e-commerce companies selling to Illinois residents. In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled in *South Dakota vs Wayfair* that states may charge tax on purchases made from out-of-state sellers. It is important to realize this revenue source as the current FY19 budget has already provisioned an inflow of \$372M<sup>8</sup> from this tax.

## 3) Pensions and debt management

Illinois must take significant steps to make substantial progress in confronting its unfunded pension liabilities. Concentrating on one area will not be sufficient. Instead, a portfolio of initiatives across different levers will likely be required.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nprillinois.org/post/illinois-issues-why-does-state-have-flat-income-tax#stream/0>

<sup>8</sup> Governor's Office of Management and Budget FY2019. <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/budget/Documents/Economic%20and%20Fiscal%20Policy%20Reports/FY%202018/Economic-and-Fiscal-Policy-Report-FY19.pdf>

## Increase funding to the pension system

Opportunities exist to find unique and new ways to increase funding. The state could apply a direct revenue stream to help pay down the pension debt. These revenue streams could have provisions to ensure they are only used for payment of pension debt and benefits. Asset transfers could also be used as a means to add value to pension systems. For example, if the state were to move an asset to a pension fund, it could be used to reduce the unfunded liabilities for the pension system and increase the funding ratio, leading to potentially reduced interest costs on pension debt.

## Improve the investment engine

The returns that Illinois currently achieves on its pension funds could also be increased by improving the investment engine. To generate higher returns and with the added benefit of enhanced efficiency, Illinois could work with local constituencies to consolidate pension funds for similar systems within verticals (e.g., fire, public safety). This move would help smaller funds not only achieve higher returns but also reduce the cost of fund administration and give managers greater visibility into investment decisions and trade-offs.

While consolidation could take time, there are shorter term opportunities. For one, the state could negotiate a standard “one-price” investment management fee for all Illinois pension funds to eliminate the variance in fund management costs. In addition, the state could revisit pension investment management; asset allocations could be reassessed to ensure that investments are providing the highest possible risk-adjusted returns.

## Re-shape the pension payment curve

To put the pension funds on a more sustainable path, the committee discussed whether the state could consider re-shaping the pension payment curve. For instance, the state could create a sustainable amortization schedule combined with other changes to improve the system which could meet short term budget needs while improving the funded ratio in the long term. The goal here is to find a rational payment plan that increases the funded ratio each year while still meeting the cost of paying benefits to current and future retirees. Such action would need to be taken in conjunction with changes that increase funding, improve investments, and/or increase stability such that debt markets see that Illinois is serious about comprehensively solving the pension funding deficiency.

## Modernize Bonded Debt Provisions

Illinois should also explore ways to improve its existing bonded indebtedness provisions to provide government officials with more flexibility in managing debt. The state should consider changes including but not limited to: maturity limitations, current statutory refunding and/or restructuring requirements within constitutional limitations, and available security. This could help the state create innovative financial vehicles to manage all of its debt including the pension debt while also strengthening Illinois’ creditworthiness.

## Moving into a more stable financial future

Illinois’ growth prospects and its reputation have been affected by the past four decades of unstable fiscal policies. Fortunately, we still have a wide array of actions that could put our fiscal house in order.

Each new administration brings with it a fresh perspective and momentum to change course. By pursuing a robust portfolio of initiatives, Illinois can propel itself towards fiscal stability. It will realistically take many years to address the accumulated deficit, but it is essential that the state immediately identify the path to fiscal stability so that the state can meet strategic priorities and bring Illinois back to the forefront.





# Committee on Equality, Equity, and Opportunity

## **Aspiration**

Illinois needs leadership that is committed to using an equity lens to ensure everyone has access to opportunity, human rights, and civil rights. The new administration must set an unambiguous tone and make clear its goal of building an Illinois where everyone has equal and equitable opportunity regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, military status, pregnancy, employment status, family status, returning citizen status, language, housing status, zip code, or income.

The new administration should strive to create an inclusive culture in the state and in government reflecting the full diversity of Illinois, with diverse leaders in decision-making roles. Leadership across state agencies should be focused on protecting human and civil rights, acknowledging, tracking, and eliminating explicit and implicit racial bias against black and brown communities, dismantling systemic oppression, and creating and enforcing anti-discrimination policies.

## **Illinois today**

Illinois has faced a number of challenges that have created or increased inequities. The state's budget impasse and ongoing fiscal challenges led to reduced staffing levels in state agencies that enforce existing human and civil rights laws, causing an increase in the backlog of unheard discrimination claims. Racial and economic inequity in communities across the state has intensified due to reduced funding for community-based human service providers that ensure children, individuals, and families have equitable access to the building blocks of health and opportunity. Inadequate state funding for schools has meant that public education has not offered equitable opportunity to all students. Barriers to health care have increased, leaving thousands of children and adults without appropriate medical care.

Economic opportunity is negatively impacted by systemic inequities in the workplace, including lack of access to good paying jobs, low wages, gender and racial pay gaps, a lack of paid medical and family leave, and inadequate protections for pregnant and parenting workers. Workplace inequities impact black and brown communities more acutely, adding to barriers for economic advancement and mobility. Sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace further reduces equitable opportunity by creating unsafe and retaliatory work environments.

In some cases, the legal and policy protections already written into state law are insufficient to protect the human and civil rights of the people of Illinois. For example, without a private cause of action for people seeking compliance with our human and civil rights laws, people are

without a legal remedy. In other cases, existing legal protections should be expanded to reflect the full intent of state and federal law.

These weaknesses are significant, but present great opportunity for the new administration. The incoming administration should ensure that decision-making authority in the executive branch is held by people who reflect the full diversity of the state. Investments should seek to create equitable opportunity across government functions, from ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act to enforcing equitable school funding that gives all children the opportunity to succeed regardless of their background. And state law and resource allocation should be updated to fully protect human and civil rights and to ensure enforcement of existing laws is achieved.

Attacks from the federal level have increased threats to equality and equity, and the new administration should work with the Illinois Attorney General and other states around the country to help create a firewall of protection for Illinoisans against dangerous federal policies that harm people.

An inclusive administration that reflects the diversity of Illinois in leadership positions will be poised to set their sights on an Illinois that has equal and equitable opportunity for everyone.

### **Path Forward**

The committee examined a path forward to safeguard Illinoisans from destructive federal policies and reform Illinois systems that perpetuate inequality and inequity to ensure every resident has equitable opportunity.

Other transition committees worked specifically on the topics of economic development, capital and infrastructure, education, and restorative justice and community safety, and those recommendations are not explicitly included in this report. The administration should utilize an equity lens in the implementation of all transition committee recommendations.

The committee recommends the following priorities and actions:

- 1. The new administration should amend existing law and allocate funding to ensure state agencies can enforce human and civil rights and utilize an equity lens in decision-making and priority setting.**

The new administration should ensure leadership and staff of state agencies reflects the full diversity of Illinois. They should also identify and review the use of automated decision-making systems in all areas of state government to ensure racial bias against black and brown communities is not driving current process.

One area the new administration should focus on is updating and maintaining government data systems that can track equitable resource allocation and outcomes in communities that have experienced disinvestment. With that data in hand, the new administration should integrate

inclusion principles to achieve equality and equity for new and existing policies and resource allocation.

For example, the new administration should support legislation that utilizes data systems to make Illinois a leader in statewide school protections for students by collecting discipline data and tracking disproportionate disciplinary treatment based on race and gender. The new administration should also work with stakeholders to pass legislation to require permanent traffic and pedestrian data collection. This will help ensure that data collected by police is accessible so the state can map inequities. The new administration can use data about voting systems across the state to ensure all communities have equitable opportunity to cast their ballots.

Agencies that protect human and civil rights should be fully funded, including the Illinois Department of Human Rights, Illinois Department of Labor, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the Human Rights Commission. The new administration should develop a plan to eliminate the backlog of unresolved cases in the Department of Human Rights and the Human Rights Commission so people can get justice. Inclusion principles should be incorporated into any capital plan to ensure funding and projects comply with the Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise program M/WBE, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Illinois Accessibility Code requirements. Finally, there is an opportunity to strengthen and enforce laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Illinois Accessibility Code, the Illinois Human Rights Act, the Illinois Environmental Barriers Act, the Illinois Civil Rights Act, and the Foster Care Bill of Rights.

## **2. Stand up to federal policies that infringe on the human and civil rights of Illinois residents and advocate for enforcement of federal policies that promote fairness, compassion, representation, and inclusion**

The new administration should be a firewall between Illinoisans and dangerous federal policies that hurt and discriminate against the state's residents. The new administration should strengthen state protections against federal legislation and rulemaking that increase barriers to Illinois residents striving to succeed. In some cases, there are proactive steps the state can take to minimize harm, like changing the administration of programs like SNAP (the program formerly known as food stamps) to minimize the harmful impacts of any federally proposed work requirements. The new administration can also speak out publicly against the Trump administration's proposed changes to rules that unfairly target immigrant families by penalizing them for accessing programs like health care and nutrition programs. In other cases, the new administration should work with other governors and Illinois' attorney general to ensure we are creating a legal firewall against policies and programs that diminish civil rights.

One important action the new administration should take is advocating for policies and resources to ensure the decennial census correctly counts every person in the state of Illinois, including people who are incarcerated and hard-to-count people. It is vital that the state's full population is represented in the census to ensure the state receives its fair share of federal

resources and fair legislative representation for all communities. The new administration should invest resources in communities that have experienced disenfranchisement and disinvestment to provide education about the importance of participating in the census.

Finally, the new administration should change the current lens the state uses when it comes to federal consent decrees that protect the civil and human rights of Illinois' residents. Rather than view the consent decrees as an impediment, the state should commit to fulfilling the obligations required in consent decrees and embrace the settlements as a vehicle for transformative change that provide a floor—not a ceiling—for proper resource allocation and policymaking. The new administration should ensure that every state agency is aware of requirements imposed by various federal consent decrees and ensure Illinois is meeting the needs of populations protected by consent decrees. Improved and coordinated communication about the requirements of consent decrees among the agencies and divisions and the attorney general would ensure the state's obligations are being met.

### **3. Make Illinois a safe state with equitable civic, social, and economic opportunity for all residents.**

The new administration should boldly and proactively take steps to support and protect the human and civil rights of all Illinoisans and remove barriers to equitable social and economic opportunity.

The new administration should work with stakeholders to enforce and expand the Trust Act protections and make Illinois a welcoming state for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers where everyone is treated with dignity and provided opportunity. To achieve that goal, the new administration should allocate resources to programs that inform immigrant communities of their rights under the law. The new administration should also support legislation that eliminates barriers to state-based financial aid for undocumented immigrant students, and increase language access to government services.

The new administration should create and promote policies that ensure every Illinoisan can live free of discrimination with equitable opportunity regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To ensure appropriate representation the new administration should support legislation that requires public education curriculum to cover history of the LGBTQ community. To ensure access to medically accurate and appropriate information, the administration should support legislation that ensures sexual health in public education is LGBTQ-inclusive.

To increase economic and civic opportunity for returning citizens, the new administration should support legislation to “ban the box” in applications to public and private institutions of higher education and remove barriers for returning citizens to access housing and employment and voting. The state can also ensure the provisions of the automatic voter registration law are

fully enforced and protect voting rights for all voters, including returning citizens, incarcerated individuals, and students.

Climate change is a risk to all Illinoisans, and the new administration should utilize an environmental justice lens to mitigate and eliminate systemic inequities that lead to disproportionate impacts of climate change and other environmental risks on communities of color and low-income communities. The new administration should fully fund the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and ensure it is enforcing laws and regulations that protect communities of color and low-income communities from environmental threats. Principles of climate resiliency should be incorporated into any capital plan.

#### **4. Enact and implement public policies that promote workplace fairness, equity, and sustainable economic opportunity for all Illinoisans**

The new administration should support equity in the workplace to ensure every Illinoisan can work with dignity for fair wages in a safe, sustainable work environment. The new administration should work with stakeholders to implement a \$15 minimum wage. The new administration should ensure its own agencies do not perpetuate racial, ethnic, and gender pay gaps and create a working group to identify tangible tactics and strategies to address those inequities across the state.

The impact of sexual harassment and gender-based violence experienced in the workplace creates an unsafe, inequitable, and unproductive work environment. The new administration should lead by example to eliminate the culture of sexual harassment, assault, gender-based violence, and retaliation in the workplace. The new administration should conduct rigorous trainings in the governor's office and across state agencies that include clear examples of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, outline prohibited retaliation, define consequences for retaliation and protections for whistleblowers, enhance empathy for people experiencing harassment, teach tools of bystander intervention, and define proper reporting process for both the victim and the person receiving the report. The administration should also take steps to ensure survivors of gender-based violence that occurs outside the workplace have the supports they need to thrive at work.

To create a stronger workforce where everyone has the opportunity to advance, the new administration should engage stakeholders and work with the General Assembly to address paid family and medical leave for Illinoisans. They should also promote equality for people who are pregnant and parenting and support policies that aid and accommodate employees and job applicants who are pregnant, recovering from childbirth, and/or breastfeeding.

#### **5. Make Illinois a national leader in eliminating barriers so everyone can access to their right to quality, affordable health care coverage**

The new administration should increase access to affordable, stable health care in Illinois to eliminate health disparities. The new administration should protect and stabilize the Affordable Care Act to eliminate racial and economic health disparities and prevent discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions. For example, the new administration can implement state law protecting people with pre-existing conditions from junk insurance plans. The new administration can also address Medicaid enrollment issues that leave thousands of children and families without health insurance coverage for months at a time. A Medicaid buy-in program would bring down consumer costs and move Illinois towards a system of universal health care.

The new administration should also extend health care coverage to undocumented adults and reduce disparities and barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing health care and home and community-based services. The administration should ensure people with disabilities have real options that provide them with supports to live independent, meaningful lives that are integrated and included in the community. To ensure access to health care in communities across the state, the new administration should prioritize creating, maintaining, and updating health infrastructure in a capital plan.

The new administration should support investments and policy changes that will reduce new HIV cases and improve health outcomes for people living with HIV. For example, the new administration should reinstate funding for PrEP, a daily prescription drug that prevents HIV infection, that was defunded under the previous administration. To increase fairness and equity for transgender people, the state should require that insurance providers, including Medicaid, cover medically-necessary services, including gender-affirming services for transgender and non-binary people.

The new administration should take action to keep abortion safe, legal, and accessible in Illinois. It should work with lawmakers to repeal the Illinois Abortion Law of 1975 and the Illinois Parental Notice of Abortion act of 1995 and replace it with legislation that keeps abortion safe, legal, and accessible. The new administration should also fully enforce HB 40.

# Educational Success

## Aspiration: A world-class education for every child

Illinois should be the best place to raise a child in America. Every family, beginning prenatally, should have access to comprehensive health care, information about home-visiting, and access to high-quality, birth-to-five early learning services that prepare their children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Every child should have access to an adequately and equitably funded public school led by high quality, well-compensated educators who are prepared to meet their unique needs. The climate in every school should be healthy, safe, inclusive, and supportive.

Every young adult should have access to affordable college and career training opportunities that are aligned to workforce needs. These opportunities should be available in every region of the state and provide people with a reason to build their future in Illinois.

Our state should provide every student with the best opportunities that it has to offer, regardless of their race and ethnicity, family income, zip code, ability, citizenship status, primary language, or LGBTQ status. In order for this to occur, inequities must be addressed in every phase of a child's life and adequate funding should be established, maintained, and used to ensure all students succeed. This vision of cradle-to-career success is achievable if state leaders, systems, laws, and investments operate with a shared student-centered, equity-focused purpose.

## Illinois today:

Illinois' greatest strength is its people, especially our children, who hold the promise of our state's future. Over time, the state has established the foundational elements of educational success. Illinois' educational system is ranked in the top half of states across the country.<sup>i</sup> Illinois offers comprehensive, birth-to-five early learning programs. The new evidence-based K-12 funding formula positions the state to provide an equitable and adequate public education to students living in every corner of the state. Illinois is home to internationally recognized universities and has one of the most comprehensive community college systems in the nation.<sup>ii</sup> With appropriate support, Illinois has the potential to be a national leader in education.

Illinois is home to nearly three million children under the age of 18.<sup>iii</sup> Just over two million of them attend public schools and approximately 950,000 are 5 years and under.<sup>iv</sup> There are roughly 465,000 students of all ages attending public colleges and universities, about 27,000 students participating in non-credit community college courses, and another 215,000 attending independent not-for-profit institutions.<sup>v</sup>

Although a mountain of empirical evidence suggests that access to high quality birth-to-five programming improves school readiness and life outcomes, Illinois' commitment to early care and education has waned over time. Financial instability and fluctuations in



program eligibility reduced participation in the state's Child Care Assistance Program by approximately 30,000 children.<sup>vi</sup> While the state ranks fourth in the nation in preschool access for 3-year-olds, it ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> in preschool access for 4-year-olds.<sup>vii</sup> Illinois' inadequate investment in early learning, along with other factors, has affected children's preparation for school. New data from Illinois' Kindergarten Individual Developmental Survey shows that only 24 percent of children enter school ready to learn at the kindergarten level.<sup>viii</sup> Among student subgroups, only 13 percent of Latino children, 19 percent of Black children, and 29 percent of white children were found to be kindergarten ready.

As young children transition from early learning programs to elementary school, too many enroll in schools that are severely underfunded. The state's overreliance on property taxes to fund education created inequities that have persisted for far too long. For years, the state share of the total cost of education has been among the lowest in the nation, at approximately 25 percent with local taxpayers covering nearly 67 percent.<sup>ix</sup> Nationally, the average share of state funding for education is 47 percent with an average local contribution of 45 percent.

Inadequate and inequitable funding, combined with other factors, has contributed to the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers. Only 20 percent of low-income students in fourth grade are proficient in reading compared to 55 percent of wealthier students.<sup>x</sup> In eighth grade, 18 percent of low-income students are proficient at math compared to 47 percent of their wealthier peers. Gaps in performance persist in high school where 80 percent of low-income students graduate within five years compared to the statewide average of 88 percent.<sup>xi</sup> If adequately funded, the state's new evidence-based K-12 funding formula will provide a more equitable investment in students across the state and position our schools to reduce the achievement gap between low-income students and their peers.

In addition to well-funded schools, students need educators who are well-trained, appropriately compensated, and recognized for their leadership. Unfortunately, Illinois, like many states, is suffering from a teacher shortage. Over the last ten years, the number of teachers declined by nearly three and a half percent.<sup>xii</sup> Classroom vacancies are especially prevalent in rural communities and in Chicago Public Schools. Nearly half of the vacant teaching positions are for special education, 36 percent, and bilingual/ESL, 12 percent.<sup>xiii</sup>

As young adults weigh college and career training options, Illinois has not done enough to provide them with attractive, affordable local opportunities to pursue their dreams. Diminishing state support for public colleges and universities, rising tuition and fees, and insufficient investment in the Monetary Award Program have pushed students out of state or out of college altogether. Today, only 51 percent of adults in Illinois have a postsecondary degree or credential, far short of the 70 percent estimates suggest are needed for the jobs of 2025.<sup>xiv</sup>

**Path forward: Moving towards equity and adequacy**

As the administration charts a new course for education from cradle-to-career, it should focus on the following themes:

- Align priorities across systems,
- Ensure equitable and adequate funding,
- Strengthen the pipeline of teachers and child serving-professionals, and
- Ensure that education meets the needs of all learners.

Given the diversity of students attending public schools, policy changes and investments must be responsive to the multifaceted needs of our youth, especially those who are racially and ethnically diverse, low-income, English learners, high school dropouts, students who are undocumented, LGBTQ, rural residents, and students with disabilities. This is essential to achieving a welcoming, safe, and supportive learning environment for all students.

### **Theme 1: Align priorities across systems**

*Near-term action for the state - Create a multi-agency, cradle-to-career vision and strategic plan for advancing student and whole person success.*

There is a disconnect between the state agencies and governing boards that oversee early learning programs, elementary and secondary education, and post-secondary institutions. State agency leaders rarely work together towards common goals, in part due to different governance structures, funding priorities, and measures of accountability. The lack of alignment hampers student transitions between grade spans, prevents the coordinated use of data systems, and hinders progress towards state goals. The new administration should facilitate the coordination of agency heads and governing boards to develop a shared vision and strategic plan to promote student success from cradle-to-career.

*Foster collaboration among all child-serving state agencies to ensure that children and families are provided seamless support aligned to a shared vision for student health, safety, and success.*

Establishing a common vision and strategic plan for student success across systems is necessary, but not sufficient to achieve alignment. The new administration should establish a consistent meeting schedule for agency leaders that is focused on advancing agencies' common goals, information sharing, and addressing common challenges. Advisory boards, like the Illinois Early Learning Council and the P-20 Council, should be involved in this effort given their expertise and institutional knowledge about Illinois' programs and services.

*Strengthen and utilize data systems to improve decision-making, accountability, and the quality of services provided to young children and their families.*

Individual state agencies lack the capacity to produce timely data and they have difficulty utilizing the data they produce to improve services and drive decision-making. Insufficient data limits the ability of service providers and other stakeholders to conduct needs assessments, improve recruitment and enrollment strategies, and foster equity and inclusion. Every strategy for improving educational success would be strengthened

by access to better data. The new administration should create a culture of data use, data-sharing, and accountability among agencies for the production of data.

## **Theme 2: Ensure equitable and adequate funding**

*Review, reform, and expand funding for birth-to-five programming and services to increase access and promote equity for children and families.*

The state has a fiscal responsibility to support the education, health, and safety of every child. The new administration should examine the funding structures that underpin state investments to ensure that they advance equity and provide sufficient support to achieve the state's vision for early learning. Illinois' early learning programs are funded and administered by multiple state agencies. Programs' funding formulas and model for distributing funding should be reviewed and adjusted in a manner that promotes equity and inclusion.

### *Fully fund elementary and secondary schools by 2027*

The new administration should aggressively fund k-12 schools with the goal of fully funding elementary and secondary schools by 2027, a benchmark recognized by advocates and lawmakers when the state adopted the new evidence-based school funding formula. The state should consistently review and assess the distribution and utilization of resources to ensure that resources are being used to meet state goals.

### *Establish an equitable, adequate, and stable funding environment for community colleges and public universities that promotes student success and institutional accountability.*

The state should reestablish a stable funding environment for community colleges and public universities. The budget impasse diminished the reputation of the state's post-secondary institutions, encouraged more students to leave the state, and weakened the infrastructure of our schools. As the administration expands its investment in higher education, it should review the funding mechanisms that support community colleges and public universities to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion, and accountability for student success. The state should also prioritize funding for post-secondary institutions as it advances a capital plan. Insufficient capital investments at colleges and universities have delayed critical projects, affected schools' operating budgets, and diminished the campus experience for students and professors.

### *Near-term action for the state - Increase college affordability by investing in need and merit-based programs that give students resources to cover student tuition, fees, and other expenses.*

The new administration should prioritize efforts to improve college affordability so that every student has an opportunity to attain a degree or credential in Illinois. The state can pursue this goal by expanding its investment in need and merit-based financial aid programs that help students cover tuition, fees, books, and housing.

## **Theme 3: Strengthen the pipeline of teachers and child serving-professionals**

### Strengthen and diversify the early childhood workforce by improving compensation and reducing obstacles to entering the field.

For Illinois to achieve its vision of universal access to high-quality, birth-to-five early learning programs, the field will require many more teachers and child-serving professionals across service-delivery models. As the field expands, it should prioritize the recruitment of Black, Latino, and bilingual teaching candidates. The new administration should examine and address the obstacles that prevent more people of color from entering the field. Insufficient compensation and poor benefit structures also make recruitment and retention in the field very difficult. The new administration should review and increase the rate paid to early learning providers in order to improve the wages of child care workers and other early learning professionals.

### Strengthen and expand strategies to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of teachers.

The teaching profession should reflect the demographic population of students. Research suggests that children of color benefit from having high-quality teachers who share their race and culture.<sup>xv</sup> In Illinois, 83 percent of teachers are White and 51 percent of students are children of color.<sup>xvi</sup> The new administration should review licensure requirements, strengthen efforts to recruit and retain minority teaching candidates, and make it easier and more affordable for career changers to enter the profession.

### Revamp teacher training, teacher placement, and ongoing support to ensure that all students have teachers who are prepared to meet their unique needs.

Teacher preparation programs should be updated and improved to meet the diverse, multidimensional needs of today's students. Illinois' participation in the Council of Chief School State Officers' recent *Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative* is encouraging, but more work needs to be done.<sup>xvii</sup> The new administration should convene officials from the Illinois State Board of Education, teacher preparation programs, and practitioners in the field to examine and strengthen the state's approach to teacher preparation. The state should also strengthen efforts to support teachers in the field through evidence-based teacher mentoring and induction programs.

### Near-term action for the state - Develop new strategies to attract people to the teaching profession, especially in high-need areas like special education and bilingual/ESL.

Young potential teaching candidates are pursuing other careers. Data from the Illinois State Board of Education shows that, "between 2010 and 2016, the number of candidates enrolling in and completing teacher preparation programs decreased by 53 percentage points."<sup>xviii</sup> The new administration should examine and address the reasons why fewer people are entering the field, streamline the teacher licensure process, and reinvest in specialized teacher preparation programs to address the teacher shortage. The state should also increase the compensation of teachers to make the profession more competitive to other industries.

## **Theme 4: Ensure that education meets the needs of all learners**

Evaluate and support the comprehensive needs of children starting at birth.

The identification of developmental delays among infants and toddlers should be discovered and addressed as early as possible. Detecting delays and disabilities early allows families with young children to seek and secure interventions during important periods of a child's development. Although the state has been proactive in improving the connection between Early Intervention and health care providers, the new administration should promote new, innovative approaches to expanding the use of screenings and referrals for services.<sup>xix</sup>

### **Ensure that schools are equipped to meet the needs of students who have experienced trauma or have other mental health needs.**

Schools funded below adequacy often do not have the staff, e.g. social workers, psychologists, and nurses, to provide sufficient support for students. Insufficient recognition, acknowledgement, and support for students who have experienced trauma or have other mental health needs affects the climate and culture of a school. The new administration should support efforts to expand training on trauma-informed practices for all school personnel. As the state expands k-12 funding through the new evidence-based funding formula, schools will have more resources to hire and train the staff they need to support students who have experienced trauma or have other mental health needs.

### **Make every school a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ students.**

Every student should feel safe and supported at school. The new administration should encourage the Illinois State Board of Education to provide affirming, student-centered guidance to school districts on how to support LGBTQ students, with an emphasis on gender expansive and transgender students. This could help school districts across the state create a more welcoming, safe, and supportive learning environment for students.

### ***Near-term action for the state - Develop a new, student-centered strategic plan for higher education.***

It's been a decade since the state produced a strategic plan for higher education. As Illinois leaders strive to increase the attractiveness and affordability of Illinois' post-secondary institutions, the new administration should establish a strategic planning process to create a common vision, new goals, and a comprehensive, student-centered plan to guide policy-making and new investments over time.

### **Incentivize strong partnerships between K-12, higher education, and employers to expand access to vocational education and career pathways.**

The state should play a larger role in proactively connecting young people to opportunities that will prepare them for labor market success in every region of the state. There are companies throughout Illinois that have difficulty filling positions because they can't find workers who have the specialized training required to do the job. The new administration should convene the business community, higher education, and high school administrators to promote career pathways, expand vocational education in high schools, and increase access to apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship opportunities.

## Conclusion:

Illinois can lead the nation in student achievement and educational attainment by aligning systems, providing adequate and equitable funding for education, strengthening the pipeline of teachers, and ensuring that teachers are prepared to meet the needs of every child. While it will take years to implement the strategies above, the new administration should pursue progress with a fierce sense of urgency. Children across Illinois are depending on state leaders to put them in the best position to succeed in our global economy.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/1/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking#!/page/1/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)

<sup>iii</sup> [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5\\_YR\\_S0101&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5_YR_S0101&prodType=table)

<sup>iv</sup> [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5\\_YR\\_S0101&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5_YR_S0101&prodType=table)

<sup>v</sup> Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), *Enrollments & Degrees System 2016*.

<http://legacy.ibhe.org/EnrollmentsDegrees/Search.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.actforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/021418\\_BudgetAddressResponse\\_IAFC\\_Ounce\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.actforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/021418_BudgetAddressResponse_IAFC_Ounce_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> [http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Illinois\\_YB2017.pdf](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Illinois_YB2017.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> [https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/KIDS\\_2018\\_data\\_STATE\\_8-12-18.pdf](https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/KIDS_2018_data_STATE_8-12-18.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> [https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/KIDS\\_2018\\_data\\_STATE\\_8-12-18.pdf](https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/KIDS_2018_data_STATE_8-12-18.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_235.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_235.20.asp?current=yes)

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.advanceillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/TheStateWereIn-AdvanceIL-113016.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=trends&source2=graduationrate&Stateid=IL>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Teach-Illinois-Memo.pdf>

<sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Teach-Illinois-Memo.pdf>

<sup>xiv</sup> Lumina Foundation, "A Stronger Nation: Illinois' Report 2018," 2018.

<http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2018/#state/IL>;

Carnevale, Anthony, et al., Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW), "Iowa: Education and Workforce Trends through 2025," 2015, page 10.

[https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Iowa\\_Wrkfrce2025.pdf](https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Iowa_Wrkfrce2025.pdf) (page 10).

<sup>xv</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775715000084>,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/10/upshot/teacher-diversity-effect-students-learning.html>

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=teachers&source2=teacherdemographics&Stateid=IL>,

<https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/state.aspx?source=studentcharacteristics&source2=studentdemographics&Stateid=IL> (2017 data)

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<sup>xvii</sup> <https://ccsso.org/blog/ccsso-launches-effort-foster-diverse-and-culturally-responsive-teaching-workforce>

<sup>xviii</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Teach-Illinois-Memo.pdf>

<sup>xix</sup> <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/797-illinois-targets-developmental-screening-as-a-model-for-coordinating-services>

# Illinois' Emerging Leaders

## Aspiration: An Illinois that empowers youth to actively contribute to the policy making process

All youth in Illinois deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential, regardless of gender, the color of their skin, socioeconomic status, or zip code, and youth voices are critical to the creation of policy that meets the needs of Illinois' younger generations. However, the insights and lived experiences of youth are often missing from the tables where policy decisions are made.

This transition committee brought youth to the table to begin a conversation on statewide youth issues and discuss how the new administration can empower youth in their communities. This committee prioritized diversity and was comprised of high school students from across the state, including northern, central, and southern Illinois, reflecting rural, suburban, and urban experiences. This committee also embodied diverse genders, races, sexual orientations, and religions. We developed a set of shared values, identified the issues most pressing for younger generations, and generated recommendations that the new administration should consider in a value-aligned way moving forward.

The transition committee found alignment around three key values: security, responsibility, and social justice. We believe the new administration should address a range of youth issues, and can begin by improving the education system, expanding access to mental health services, and reforming the criminal justice system.

## Illinois today: A state with large opportunities but statewide challenges facing youth

The youth of Illinois are the future of Illinois and one of the state's most important assets. Illinois' youth are students, workers, interns, voters, volunteers, and change agents who contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. Many work jobs in addition to attending school, go to college, and begin careers in this state. Youth contribute to the economy, organize their communities, and serve as productive citizens of Illinois.

However, inequities in communities across the state prevent youth from reaching their full potential. Students in suburban Chicago have different education opportunities compared to those in central and southern Illinois. Many individuals witness the effects of neighborhood disinvestment, poor relationships between police and the communities they serve, and lack of economic opportunities. Further, many students struggle with mental health issues, experience a lack of guidance around educational and career options, and are not incentivized to attend college or work in state after high school.

In order to build a state that serves future generations, the state must reimagine the role of students in the policy making process, take an active role in listening to the voices of youth, and incorporate the thoughts and concerns of youth while developing new policy initiatives.



## Principles for policies affecting youth

The new administration should evaluate new policy initiatives through the lenses of the following shared values:

- **Security:** Students deserve to feel physically and psychologically safe and secure in their homes, schools, and communities. No one should feel fear while walking from home to school, experience trauma from a school shooter drill, or undergo bullying related to a disability.
- **Responsibility:** Students are community members, family members, citizens, and voters. The new administration should promote policies that preserve and protect the state in the long-term, such as strong environmental protections, affordable college, and adequately funded mental health services.
- **Social justice:** The new administration should begin to address the most pressing civil rights issues affecting youth, including educational, economic, and racial equity.

## Priority Issue + Recommendations: Education

The new administration should explore ways to expand economic opportunity for students who complete secondary or post-secondary education. Not every student in Illinois wants to attend college, but many lack guidance and direction around the availability of non-college options. Policy makers could observe the discrepancy in workforce development offerings by visiting schools in different parts of the state and then should explore ways to create pathways for post-secondary opportunities that don't require college, such as the trades. Partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and labor unions would offer students opportunities to learn about these options and explore careers that could be a good fit for their skills and talents.

The new administration should also expand the availability of advanced classes to students statewide. Many students choose to pursue college, and the new administration should assist these students by exploring ways to incentivize students to attend college in state, such as increasing college affordability, streamlining and assisting with college financial aid applications, and investing in institutions of higher education.

## Priority Issue + Recommendations: Mental Health

Students in communities across the state face significant pressures and mental health issues, and many high schools do not have adequate mental health resources that give students the tools they need to thrive at school and at home. Many school counselors have unworkable caseloads, and in several areas, a culture of stigma and shame around mental health prevent students from seeking help. Only 58% of this transition committee believes that our schools have sufficient support systems. The new administration should prioritize and invest in mental health resources in schools, regardless of geography. For example, the new administration could make efforts to change campus cultures surrounding mental health, provide increased training for counselors, and expand the number of counselors serving high schools and regions.

## Priority Issue + Recommendations: Criminal Justice Reform

The new administration should make efforts to reform the state's criminal justice system, which disproportionately impacts people of color and criminalizes adolescent behavior. This transition committee supports the legalization of recreational marijuana and the expungement of marijuana convictions from the criminal records of offenders. We also recommend that the new administration prioritize rehabilitation services in prisons, re-entry programs, and community investments that keep people out of the criminal justice system in the first place.

### Priority Issue + Recommendations: Raise Youth Voices

This transition committee recommends that the new administration make efforts to elevate youth voices across Illinois. It can begin that process by creating and sustaining a standing committee of youth advisors, consisting of a diverse group of students representing each area of the state, who can provide feedback and ideas to the administration on an ongoing basis.

### Conclusion: Empower youth across Illinois, beginning with a statewide youth summit

This transition committee believes that youth voices are too often ignored throughout the policymaking process. Leaders and lawmakers should seek to understand the challenges that youth are facing and build a state where youth feel empowered to live up to their full potential and make changes in their communities.

The new administration should take the feedback of this committee and incorporate it into its work by lifting up youth voices and being cognizant of the challenges and opportunities identified by this youth committee. A statewide youth summit spearheaded by the new administration would be an effective next step to continue to gather youth input on policy priorities.

# Healthy Children and Families

## Aspiration

The people of Illinois are our state's greatest strength and we must invest in the health and well-being of every Illinoisan to reach our greatest potential. We must remove barriers so every child, individual, family, and community in Illinois has access to the tools of health and opportunity that allow them to thrive. We must create and expand equitable, inclusive health systems that eliminate racial and economic disparities across Illinois. And we must recognize mental, emotional, and behavioral health as inseparable from physical well-being and essential to a healthy, productive society.

Children, individuals, and communities thrive when they have access to the tools they need to build healthy foundations. Illinois has a strong history of partnering with community-based agencies that meet children, individuals, and families where they are to help them build healthy lives. However, a number of barriers, including systemic disinvestment, have left some communities without essential building blocks of healthy foundations.

## Illinois Today

Years of late payments and non-payments and low service reimbursement rates stemming from the state's budget impasse and fiscal challenges harmed our children, families and communities by weakening our network of human service providers, many of whom were forced to lay off staff or shut their doors. Illinois' child welfare system has been long plagued with a lack of continuity in leadership and inadequate state investment, causing insufficient prevention, intervention, and placement services for children and families involved in or at risk for involvement in the foster care system. As a state, Illinois has lagged behind others in supporting non-institutional care and community-based solutions that give seniors and people with disabilities the tools they need to live integrated, independent lives.

A lack of centralized leadership in the executive branch for the departments and agencies serving children, individuals and families has resulted in a lack of collaboration and strategic vision, and has added to ineffective relationships between state agencies, community-based providers, and the populations they serve.

Opportunity exists to rebuild both the infrastructure for healthy foundations, as well as trust and respect between the state, communities, and providers. Illinois should take steps to ensure every child, individual, and family has access to stable resources that are the foundation of healthy lives.

Health systems present another challenge to the incoming administration, but with those challenges comes great opportunity to meet the health care needs of the entire state. Health care is a right, not a privilege, and Illinois came closer to ensuring that right for everyone with the passage of the Affordable Care Act and its Medicaid expansion option. Before the ACA, 14.5% of Illinoisans were uninsured.<sup>1</sup> After ACA implementation, the uninsured population of Illinois shrunk to 7.5%.<sup>2</sup> But that trend has reversed

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/fact-sheet/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/fact-sheet/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

during recent attacks on the ACA, and between 2016 and 2017, 37,000 fewer Illinoisans were enrolled in health insurance.<sup>3</sup>

Inefficiencies and failures in the state's Medicaid system have led to an 8.1% drop in Medicaid enrollment<sup>4</sup> since 2015, including a reduction in the number of children enrolled. Enrollment declines are the result, in part, of delays from increased hurdles enrollees face because of the added barriers of new verification procedures for application and redetermination processing. Failure to enroll and re-enroll people in a timely manner has created a cycle of "churn" in enrollment, leaving thousands of people without insurance for months at a time. In addition, low reimbursement rates and confusion during the transition to managed care threaten the stability of provider organizations and reduce the number of medical professionals available to serve patients with Medicaid coverage. Underinvestment in community-based health providers has added to the lack of stability in care for individuals, including those with complex medical needs, including substance use, addictions, and mental health challenges.

Affordable health insurance is key to ensuring people—including those with pre-existing conditions—receive the health care they need without going into debt from medical bills. Illinois has the opportunity to stabilize health systems to ensure every Illinoisan has affordable, accessible and comprehensive health care that meets their individual health needs. By ensuring that health systems are designed to eliminate racial and economic disparities with a full continuum of care, parity, innovation and accountability, we can meet the evolving health care needs of the people of Illinois.

## **Path Forward**

Despite significant challenges, Illinois has a renewed opportunity to establish quality, accessible, person-centered health systems for children, individuals, and families across the state. We can rebuild systems to eliminate disparities and increase access to affordable health care and preventative services. This starts with policy and process changes along with innovative approaches to service delivery that focus on eliminating barriers to health and opportunity for children, individuals, and families. Eliminating obstacles in data sharing across health systems and human services will lead to better policy decisions and coordination.

We must also foster and nurture partnerships with our communities, providers and the private sector. Communities impacted by policy decisions should be included in the process, and we should prioritize listening to varied perspectives and ideas to ensure voices across the state are heard as we develop solutions help build strong foundations for all Illinoisans.

- 1. The new administration should break down racial and economic barriers to ensure every child, individual, family and community has the tools they need to build healthy lives, so all Illinoisans may reach their full potential.**

The new administration should provide a centralized strategic vision that utilizes a racial equity lens to improve health systems and healthy foundations. The state should prioritize investment in community-

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/fact-sheet/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.civicfed.org/iifs/blog/illinois-medicaid-enrollment-continues-drop-2018>

based prevention and intervention services that seek to eliminate racial and economic disparities and provide children, youth, families, seniors, returning citizens, people with disabilities, refugees, and immigrants with strong foundations to build healthy lives. A person's health and well-being are influenced by the conditions present where they live, go to school, and work. Those conditions, called social determinants of health, include factors like education, nutrition, housing, employment, and economic stability.

Across agencies that serve children, individuals, and families, the new administration should prioritize improving the equity of social determinants of health in communities to improve health and well-being outcomes for all Illinoisans. The state should maximize and strengthen programs that utilize state and federal funds to eliminate poverty, health disparities, and hunger. To improve the well-being of all Illinoisans the state should make strategic investments in housing and homelessness prevention. The new administration should work to remove barriers and make housing safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, and stable for every Illinoisan regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, returning citizen status, criminal record, disability status, immigrant status, family status, source of income, employment status, or sexual orientation. One way to create affordable housing and modernize state and community facilities is to include those infrastructure improvements in a capital bill.

The new administration should commit to strengthening, rebuilding, and stabilizing the health and human services workforce in Illinois within state government, and for human service provider agencies statewide. Following years of instability, trust needs to be rebuilt between the state, agencies, providers, and communities. Within state agencies, the new administration should prioritize cultivating a workforce with policy expertise in and knowledge about the program areas they administer. Breaking down silos and establishing central policy oversight in the new administration will provide a shared vision of success and allow agencies and providers to coordinate services.

In communities, the new administration should partner with human service providers to create policies that help them attract, train, and retain skilled, quality workers. That means increasing reimbursement rates so providers can pay workers living wages, and increasing opportunities for training and professional development.

The administration should implement inclusive, transparent and accountable long-term fiscal planning between state agencies and providers, like long-term contracts or multi-year budgeting, to promote predictability, stability and effectiveness. Ensuring human service providers receive regular and reliable payments for services, and working with them to renew contracts, will help them stabilize their internal workforces and improve their ability to serve populations.

**2. The new administration should eliminate health disparities by increasing access to affordable health care and preventive services, including mental health and substance use treatment, in every community across Illinois.**

To achieve this goal, the state can work to improve existing systems to give more people access to health care. The state can improve Medicaid access, quality, and service delivery by increasing oversight, transparency, outcome reporting, and enforcement of Managed Care Organization (MCO) contracts. To allow for growth in access to care across specialties in all areas of the state and ensure a sustainable network, the state can increase Medicaid reimbursement rates across all services. Improved care

coordination between providers and MCOs will improve patient outcomes and increase efficiencies. For Illinoisans who use Medicaid as their health insurance provider, the state can ensure continuity of care by improving determination and redetermination processes to prevent children and individuals from getting kicked out of coverage.

The new administration should prioritize breaking down the stigmas around mental health and ensure health treatment for the brain is treated the same as health treatment for the body. In addition to enforcing existing mental health parity laws, the new administration should require health insurance companies to cover treatment aimed at early intervention for serious mental illnesses that reduce long-term costs for mental health treatments and connect patients with the care they need. By investing in and expanding access to integrated, community-based services, improving the service array in communities, and embracing innovative solutions like telehealth, individuals receive the right care, at the right time, in the right venue of care. To ensure continuity of care, the administration should prioritize stable housing for people who are in recovery. Encouraging better coordination among behavioral health, mental health, substance use, addiction programs, and other human services will also improve patient outcomes and increase efficiencies across sectors.

In the long-term, the new administration should be bold in exploring a Medicaid buy-in option to bring down consumer costs and move towards a system of universal healthcare. Allowing higher-income Illinoisans to enroll in Medicaid through a buy-in program provides opportunity to control insurance costs, stabilize health insurance markets and provide consumers with more coverage options. The new administration should also explore federal Medicaid match opportunities we are not currently leveraging to connect more people with the individualized, community-based care they need.

In the short term, the new administration should protect Illinoisans from impacts of a weakened ACA by improving state law to protect consumers. The state can stabilize the health insurance marketplace by investing state funds in community-based navigators to conduct outreach, public education and enrollment assistance about the availability of comprehensive and affordable plans offered through the Marketplace and Medicaid.

To protect people with pre-existing conditions, the new administration can prevent health insurance companies from varying premiums within a geographic area based on age, gender, health status, or other factors, and can prohibit discrimination based on pre-existing conditions in state law. The state can also take steps to protect health insurance consumers by enforcing protections for people with pre-existing conditions by implementing the new Short-Term Limited Duration Health Insurance Coverage Act ([SB 1737/ PA 100-1118](#)) to begin to regulate junk plans in IL and to educate consumers about them. In addition, the administration can regulate so-called “association health plans” and “health care sharing ministries” that limit access to comprehensive health care to ensure consumers are receiving a product that allows them to access the health care they need.

### **3. The new administration should stabilize and transform prevention and intervention services for children and families to better support families and care for children and youth.**

The new administration should prioritize effective reform of the child welfare system. They should establish new department leadership that recognizes the challenges and historical shortcomings that must be overcome, and has a strategic vision for improvement. To resolve the current crisis in the child

welfare system, the administration should readily and willingly work with new court appointed special master overseeing the BH consent decree to ensure Illinois is keeping children and youth safe and stable where there are allegations of abuse or neglect. In the short term, the new administration should remediate current inappropriate placements of children and youth.

The administration should prioritize the proper collaborative planning and implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) to support prevention and stability, and to promote permanency in placement. Proper implementation will allow the state to provide additional, needed preventative services to children and families who are at risk of entering the child welfare system. Moving forward, the state should value interdepartmental-and-agency collaboration to ensure children, youth, and families are receiving coordinated support. Coordinated support will ensure children, youth, and families who need intervention are identified, protected, strengthened, and supported.

The new administration should create a plan to effectively utilize state and federal funds to provide enhanced trauma-informed support to prevent placement of children and youth into the foster care system. To reduce the likelihood that youth will be involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, the administration should invest in prevention and positive youth development and support services. Permanency for children in care should be a priority, and the administration should ensure children and youth receive appropriate, supportive placement when placement is necessary.

# Restoring Illinois' Infrastructure

## Aspiration: Modern infrastructure for economic strength and equity

Infrastructure is essential to building a thriving Illinois. From investing in our airports, roads, waterways, and public transit to building the broadband infrastructure a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy demands, this a critical moment for the future of infrastructure in our state. We believe the new administration can meet the state's infrastructure needs, begin reversing decades of neglect, and improve accessibility for every Illinoisan.

Our aspiration is to address the backlog of projects, surpass the national average for state infrastructure, and create rigorous and efficient capital strategies and delivery processes. Addressing longstanding infrastructure needs should spur urban and rural development, stimulate business and job growth (especially for minority-owned businesses), and ensure residents' access to jobs and services.

## Illinois today: Infrastructure at the crossroads

Illinois has a unique competitive economic advantage sitting at the center of America's rail, air, roadway, and waterway systems. In fact, Illinois is the only state in which all major freight railroads operate.<sup>1</sup> Illinois houses the 2nd largest public transportation system in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> and its waterways connect the agricultural Midwest to major U.S. and international markets. Many industries rely on Illinois' intermodal infrastructure – rail, air, waterways, roads, transit – to move people and goods. Similarly, digital infrastructure, such as broadband, has emerged as a critical need for families, entrepreneurs, and industries because of its ability to facilitate economic growth and development in today's economy. In addition, Illinois hosts one of the country's largest urban centers in Chicago and statewide is home to several top public universities all with unique infrastructure needs. These assets combine to make Illinois an economic and cultural engine. But even with these advantages, the state's approach to infrastructure requires renewed direction and investment across major areas.

The state lacks a sustainable approach to infrastructure investments and a comprehensive strategy for prioritizing and addressing even its most basic infrastructure needs. Nearly a decade has passed since the last capital bill was enacted in 2009, and intermittent and insufficient funding has resulted in neglected infrastructure. The result has been a haphazard approach to long-term priority-setting for infrastructure investments. A new capital funding bill would be the first step toward addressing many of the state's most pressing infrastructure needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Arends et al., *Report Card for Illinois Infrastructure 2018*, American Society of Civil Engineers, 2018, <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/illinois/>

<sup>2</sup> CTA, <https://www.transitchicago.com/facts/>



In the absence of leadership, neglected infrastructure continues to be a problem. In Illinois, 2,303 bridges (8.6 percent of the statewide total) are classified as structurally deficient.<sup>3</sup> Illinois roadways, ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation<sup>4</sup>, are also prone to congestion causing travel delays. The state's waterways also carry significant risk, with many locks exceeding their design life where potential failure could lead to the loss of billions of dollars in economic activity. With respect to public transit, Chicago ranks just fifth in capital spending per area resident among peer cities<sup>5</sup>, indicating that the state is not keeping up with other peer regions as transit usage increases. Similarly, freight rail anticipates 30% future growth in shipments over the next 30 years which will necessitate continued investment.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of state-owned facilities, deferred maintenance totals just under \$7.4 billion for FY 2019, a figure that has been growing on average by \$550 million each year since FY 2012.<sup>7</sup> At public universities and community colleges, the backlog of deferred maintenance projects is over \$4 billion. The Illinois Board of Higher Education has stressed the importance of addressing the most urgent facility needs on Illinois campuses, which could bring down campus facility fees<sup>8</sup>. Investing in campus infrastructure could also help the state attract and retain students. Beyond physical infrastructure, almost ten percent of Illinois residents do not have reliable access to digital broadband.<sup>9</sup>

Internal processes designed to improve supplier diversity throughout procurement are also in need of modernization and reform. Redundant and difficult procurement processes delay project delivery. Current practices fall woefully short on achieving equity in contracting. Only 16 percent of Illinois infrastructure projects satisfied diversity sourcing criteria in 2017, below the state's own goal of 20 percent.<sup>10</sup>

Recent efforts to support the state's infrastructure should be sustained. One example is the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) that aims to reduce congestion on the rail infrastructure in northeastern Illinois. Encompassing approximately 70 projects, CREATE addresses both passenger and freight rail needs. However, individual projects such as these are not enough.

## Path forward: Principles for capital infrastructure investment

The new administration has an opportunity to reshape Illinois' infrastructure. This committee has identified three priorities for this work.

- *Support statewide infrastructure* by enabling a stable and consistent funding stream for both vertical and horizontal infrastructure projects, with greater transparency in the planning process. Passing a capital bill would be the first step toward this goal and will

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<sup>3</sup> 2017 structurally deficient bridges, ranked by total number of deficient bridges, American Road & Transportation Builders Association, January 2018, [LINK](#).

<sup>4</sup> Scott Arends et al., *Report Card for Illinois Infrastructure 2018*, American Society of Civil Engineers, 2018, <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/illinois/>.

<sup>5</sup> Regional Transport Authority, Performance Measures, March 2017, <https://www.rtachicago.org/sites/default/files/documents/plansandprograms/Performance%20Highlights%202017pgs.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Scott Arends et al., *Report Card for Illinois Infrastructure 2018*, American Society of Civil Engineers, 2018, <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/illinois/>.

<sup>7</sup> Illinois Capital Budget, FY 2019, [LINK](#).

<sup>8</sup> State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, FY 2019 Higher Education Budget Recommendations, [LINK](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://broadbandnow.com/Illinois>

<sup>10</sup> Illinois Exec. Order No. 07,2018, C.F.R. (2018), <https://www2.illinois.gov>.

ensure investments are being guided by key priorities. In addition to financing a capital bill, an objective approach to project selection and prioritization is critical.

- *Develop foundational digital infrastructure* by allocating necessary funding to match demand and supply of digital services and anticipating the effects of emerging technologies on infrastructure.
- *Expand procurement and supplier diversity* by making it easier for minority stakeholders to participate in infrastructure projects. Attention to this area will promote incentives that foster supplier diversity and reduce barriers to entry for minority stakeholders.

## 1) Support statewide infrastructure

Illinois' infrastructure challenges are broad and systemic. Across all asset classes there is an opportunity to overhaul the infrastructure funding process and improve the approach to project delivery. To do so, we believe there are some key strategies to consider.

### Consider guiding principles for a capital bill

A capital bill will be most effective if it invests funding based on areas of the highest need. "Need" should be evaluated by both project-based needs (e.g., road repairs) and residents' needs (e.g., ability to promote inclusive growth or accessibility to accommodate people of different abilities).

Important guiding principles for an effective capital bill should include the following:

- Structure the project and investment portfolio to appropriately prioritize both fixing deficient infrastructure and capitalizing on opportunities to drive economic growth. This means the state should develop a sound methodology to pick the right projects—recommendations to which have been detailed further in this report
- Prioritize addressing health and safety risks to promote equity through infrastructure (e.g., water contamination, residents without basic housing, deficient bridges)
- Secure sustained funding for sound projects that are already well underway or are "shovel-ready"
- Ensure adequate funding for local needs and regional priorities, including the needs of rural areas
- Account for building and maintaining the "last mile" transportation (e.g., local roads to a transit hub or airport) in total project funding
- Consider end-to-end resident experience (e.g., bike-friendliness, congestion-reduction focused intermodal efforts, and accessibility for people with disabilities)

Most importantly, it is vital to ensure that all infrastructure classes—including road, rail, mass transit, water, vertical, and digital infrastructure—receive specific consideration for funding. This integrated approach can also help decision makers think about current and future infrastructure needs.

### Implement more transparent and objective project selection

Illinois needs a more transparent and objective project prioritization process for capital funding. In addition to project cost and other existing measures, prioritizations should more clearly focus on factors such as resident impact (e.g., safety, congestion reduction, or usage), economic impact (e.g., measures of inclusive growth such as increased mobility for disconnected communities, improving higher education institutions, or stimulating industrial growth), and climate impact and resiliency. A transparent process, executed in close coordination with local

governments, could provide the legislators with the proper tools for long-term decision making to drive robust growth and fix deficient infrastructure.

#### Stabilize capital funding and make it more sustainable

The lack of a steady funding source has impeded long-term planning and allowed existing infrastructure to fall into disrepair. The state can smooth capital funding by accessing private and public funding sources and funding projects in more innovative ways. These methods may include maximizing federal financing opportunities and grants, critical funding Illinois has often missed out on, especially compared to states with more aggressive and organized approaches.

Public-private partnerships can also uncover funding opportunities and use public money more efficiently. In addition, Illinois should supplement bond-funded projects with pay-as-you-go project payment plans and realize additional funds from considering new user fees or increasing existing sources where appropriate. Lastly, the state could undertake a review of the “legacy” accounting structure for infrastructure, which often constricts sources and uses of funds in a very rigid way. Creating more flexibility here could help the state with redirection of funds during times of need. Making the funding sustainable will be critical to avoid large build-ups in deferred maintenance.

#### Appoint a senior official focused on improving data-sharing, coordination, and planning across asset classes and regional/local needs

Illinois currently lacks an infrastructure advocate who can drive better planning, coordination, and collaboration across the many infrastructure agencies, both state and local. A senior-level official who serves as the face of Illinois infrastructure and coordinates federal, state, and local agency efforts can help Illinois improve infrastructure outcomes. This person can also direct efforts to collect and share data among infrastructure agencies to enable business and operational analytics. To improve project performance and outcomes, the infrastructure leader can also help create technical taskforces of public- and private-sector experts who can provide input throughout project lifecycles.

#### Simplify processes and implement more flexible approaches

Illinois should update policies and processes to streamline the delivery of infrastructure projects and open processes to outside ideas. For instance, we can promote alternative project-delivery methods to supplement the traditional design-bid-build model. Examples include alternative technical concepts that can potentially be more efficient and cost-effective than the state’s existing approaches. Furthermore, increased public-private partnerships could increase the efficiency of project delivery.

To expedite projects, Illinois can reduce redundant steps and streamline the review and permitting processes by conducting certain reviews in parallel versus sequentially. Where necessary, the state can also reevaluate procurement processes to reduce obstacles to prompt and appropriate purchasing, such as ensuring the appropriate level of required vendor follow-ups with additional procurement officials and conducting the appropriate amount of public hearings. Such changes will also make it easier for smaller vendors to participate in competitive selection.

#### Engage stakeholders throughout the infrastructure lifecycle

Illinois should do a better job of engaging residents, the engineering and design community, businesses, and other stakeholders across the infrastructure lifecycle. This could include setting and communicating clear goals for how infrastructure investments can foster inclusive economic

growth and accessibility; coordinated communications with the public on infrastructure value, needs, and challenges; and ongoing communication during project execution. When residents are made aware of the benefits from infrastructure investments, public support grows and even user fees can increase. Similarly, Illinois could consider creating better channels for listening to residents and their needs.

In addition to the above, the state can involve the engineering community earlier in the process and tap its expertise to improve planning and execution. Not only will earlier and deeper involvement with engineers result in quicker “shovel-readiness,” project outcomes could be expected to improve as the result of broad input from engineers.

## 2) Develop foundational digital infrastructure

Widely available high-speed broadband is critical to attract economic development and foster digital literacy. Furthering that goal requires action in several areas.

### Enable foundational digital infrastructure

Illinois can do more to support digital infrastructure by investing in high-speed internet access in all state buildings, including public hospitals and universities. To spread the reach of broadband, Illinois should identify priority areas for broadband delivery and channel service through a designated office such as the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. In the process, the state can help telecommunications providers overcome public right-of-way regulations that make it more difficult for digital conduits to be included during road construction.

Furthermore, improved digital accessibility in state infrastructure—such as audible websites and accessible screen readers in state buildings—can make public spaces more inclusive. Beyond the economic and structural advantages that come from expanded digital infrastructure, these investments also increase accessibility for residents of all abilities.

### Drive adoption of digital services

Supporting digital infrastructure across Illinois should include supporting suppliers and purchasers in areas of the state that may be hard to do business. For example, the state could create a cooperative purchasing program for rural broadband providers to decrease the cost of digitization in certain regions. In addition, the state could look into provide matching infrastructure funding (in addition to the FCC grants) to cover underserved and rural areas.

### Prepare infrastructure for emerging technologies

The whole world is seeing significant shifts across the digital ecosystem and Illinois must fight to keep up. The state should consider updating policies to reduce hurdles to test and build emerging technologies such as 5G internet and autonomous vehicles. Digital labs supported by public-private partnerships can test new technologies and help the state plan for future infrastructure needs.

## 3) Expand procurement and supplier diversity

While an equitable procurement and supplier diversity process should be the norm for our state, it is clear Illinois continues to fall short. It is essential that this administration commits to an inclusive process and will make key changes that are long overdue. These initiatives include a few key approaches.

### Eliminate barriers to entry for minorities

Minority-owned vendors can be stymied by policy and processes when looking for opportunities to work with the state. Illinois can support minority vendors by updating policies to standardize and simplify the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) certification process. The current process is cumbersome for too many and should be inclusive to Illinoisans of all races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities. To increase the success of BEP, the state should provide education and training on the bidding and delivery processes to vendors.

Illinois can also make contracts more accessible to minority vendors by updating the traditional bidding process to include vendor diversity as a criterion. Because minority vendors are often small, the state should unbundle infrastructure contracts where appropriate to create more opportunities for smaller companies to contribute.

### Prioritize diversity with leadership support and a commitment to goals

With strong leadership support, the state and procurement leaders can motivate vendors to participate in its efforts to diversify its vendor pool. Tactics could include encouraging vendors to adopt inclusive programs (e.g., apprenticeships and on-the-job training) and consistently enforcing programmatic orders around vendor diversity, which includes diversity and inclusion along dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, and ability. Incorporating diversity and inclusion goals in request-for-proposal (RFP) evaluations can also signal a commitment to vendor diversity and incorporate equity of opportunity into the evaluation process.

## Guiding Illinois infrastructure toward modernization and equity

We have identified top priorities to finance and maintain Illinois' existing infrastructure, strengthen the foundations of the state's digital infrastructure, and encourage economic equity through infrastructure accessibility and supplier diversity. In particular, the new administration could consider launching a few initiatives in the near-term that could serve as important first steps:

- Develop and pass a principled capital bill to provide funding for infrastructure needs
- Review procurement processes to identify areas for simplification
- Improve enforcement of diversity goals in the state procurement processes
- Create goals and metrics to track infrastructure investments and their impact on inclusive growth

If Illinois can design its infrastructure investments and processes to be competitive on a national and global level, it will pave the way to a higher quality of life for our residents, increase economic prosperity, and establish Illinois as an economic leader across the nation.

# Job Creation & Economic Opportunity

## Aspiration: A more prosperous and equitable future

Illinois has the talent, business base, and the motivation to create better and more opportunities for its residents. We envision Illinois can be a state that maintains its population, ensuring that all residents, particularly young people, stay in the state. In addition, Illinois has the opportunity to focus on improving the livelihood of workers and families, including improving the workforce readiness of everyone in the state. At the same time, the state can attract and retain more businesses. A focus on growing companies could mean augmenting R&D activity and small business growth. The powerful result of resolving these challenges is that Illinois can brand itself as the economic hub of the Midwest, taking a place among the leading states in the country. With the right approach, we believe Illinois should strive to return the state to above average growth in employment and wages and ensure shared prosperity, with inclusive growth among residents and across geographies.

## Illinois today: Lagging economic growth

Illinois offers many meaningful advantages as a place to live and thrive. It is the sixth largest U.S. state by population, with 12.8 million residents, and fifth by GDP, of \$800 billion.<sup>1</sup> It is also the commercial center of the Midwest, with 32 Fortune 500 companies headquartered within its borders, fourth among all states.<sup>2</sup> A wide range of industries, from agriculture and manufacturing to professional services and health care, have a robust presence in Illinois. Industry in Illinois benefits from a qualified workforce: 33 percent of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher relative to the national average of 30 percent.<sup>3</sup> New talent emerges consistently from the state's globally recognized institutions of education such as the University of Illinois, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago, which produce cutting-edge research. Meanwhile, graduates from throughout the Midwest come to Illinois and the Chicago metro area, the third largest in the U.S.

Yet despite its advantages, Illinois' economy has been underperforming: Both GDP growth, 0.5 percent per year, and labor productivity growth, 0.4 percent per year, between 2007 and 2017 lag behind national averages in the same time frame 1.5 and 0.8 percent, respectively.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of challenges that may be driving this issue. For example, Illinois has experienced the highest levels of outbound domestic migration in the U.S., particularly among young people—the state ranked 49th in millennial population growth from 2010 to 2017 at a rate of -2.3 percent. From an employment standpoint, there is a lack of qualified candidates for available roles in middle- and high-skill occupations, e.g. health care services, computer/software, first-line supervisors of service workers, truck drivers.<sup>5</sup> In addition, young companies across the nation are some of the most important job creators.<sup>6</sup> However, Illinois lags most states across the innovation funnel, from research-and-development, R&D, funding, 35<sup>th</sup> on university R&D as

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2017; Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017; <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/il/PST045218>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ceo.com/miscellaneous/states-with-the-most-fortune-500-companies>

<sup>3</sup> US News Best States 2017

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis; Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bureau of Economic Analysis; Moody's Analytics

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics; Business Employment Dynamics

a percent of GDP,<sup>7</sup> to the rate of new entrepreneurs, ranked 19<sup>th</sup> for large states.<sup>8</sup> Complicating the issue, Illinois is home to high economic inequality across regions and populations. It is the U.S. state with the tenth highest economic inequality.<sup>9</sup>

## Path forward: A principled approach to support workers and businesses

It will take a concerted effort and a holistic approach to address the full scope of challenges and revitalize the state's economy. This report highlights several themes.

- **Ensure economic inclusion and equity** so that all residents, including those who are currently underserved, such as women, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, and rural or semi-rural residents, benefit from the state's prosperity.
- **Support a skilled workforce** to take advantage of opportunities. This work could include increasing awareness and accessibility of new and existing opportunities and career paths and supporting residents and workers in finding and maintaining fairly-compensated vocations.
- **Prioritize key industry clusters** that can stimulate economic growth for the state, including both traditional industries (e.g. transportation, manufacturing) and emerging ones (e.g. life sciences, technology, industries).
- **Spur innovation and entrepreneurship** to strengthen the global competitiveness of Illinois businesses. The state can improve funding, supportive infrastructure, and technical assistance for innovators and entrepreneurs.
- **Foster an attractive business climate** that is supportive of a wide range of businesses. Considerations include ease and cost of doing business, consistent support for small businesses, and improved state branding.
- **Drive inclusive statewide economic growth** that builds on unique strengths and addresses the challenges of each region, county, and town.

### Theme 1: Ensure inclusion and equity

An important goal for the state to consider is inclusive economic growth. Illinois should focus on underrepresented groups and regions to ensure that everyone in the state can reach their potential.

This effort could include improving underserved populations' access to the state economy. For example, Illinois could expand educational and training programs for youth, rural residents, veterans, women, black and brown communities, and people with disabilities. Because immigrants start a disproportionate number of businesses, the state could also consider expanding governmental support for immigrant business activity.<sup>10</sup> In addition, all regions of the

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<sup>7</sup> National Science Foundation 2017

<sup>8</sup> Kauffman Index; Measured as rate of new entrepreneurs per month per 100,000

<sup>9</sup> As measured by the Gini coefficient, a common tool to measure economic inequality. U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2018

<sup>10</sup> <https://hbr.org/2016/10/immigrants-play-a-disproportionate-role-in-american-entrepreneurship>

state could be prioritized and considered to reduce regional inequality, both across the state and within urban centers. Beyond facilitating access, Illinois can also directly provide opportunities to Black, Latino, and women-owned businesses. The state should increase the distribution of contracts with these businesses and improve compliance with the state's purchasing diversity programs at the same time.

As it acts on its values of economic inclusion and equity, the new administration should do more to communicate and celebrate these efforts. Public communications about this work can motivate even more minority business owners to participate and brand Illinois as a state in which everyone shares in economic prosperity.

## Theme 2: Support a skilled workforce

### Fostering greater awareness of industry-specific opportunities and career pathways.

Investing in talent is essential to building and maintaining economic opportunities in the state. The first step can be promoting greater awareness of existing opportunities and pathways across the state. These efforts could include both public and private work that educates job seekers about opportunities. Public work could include promoting statewide platforms to connect job seekers and potential jobs, such as new or existing websites that map real-time opportunities and resources.

### Ensuring that education and training are closely linked to job opportunities.

For students and workers, Illinois could encourage more tightly linking education and compatible careers. The state could formalize clear pipelines from existing and new job-readiness programs to specific jobs and careers. For example, the administration could consider establishing regional workforce training centers that are affiliated with specific career pathways, including sector-specific programming, such as ones focused on hospitality, health care, or manufacturing. In addition, the state could support workers at all stages of the vocational development process by improving the accessibility of vocational certificates and increasing the level of transparency around certification requirements for prospective workers. There could be an important focus on demystifying on-the-job expectations, encouraging creativity and innovation, and developing individuals' "soft skills," e.g., "pre-apprenticeship" training.

The state can also ease new workers' entrance into the workforce with incentives for research and implementation of workforce development initiatives, including tax credits for employers who provide internships and apprenticeships, particularly for high-need populations. Finally, the state can support new workers by easing the cost of education through financial aid, particularly for workers who stay in Illinois and work in industries underserved by the labor market.

### Supporting workers to reach their professional goals.

Throughout workers' careers, the state can help them reach their personal and professional goals. The incoming administration has highlighted the need to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Beyond this, the state could sponsor initiatives to support families, such as through paid parental and family leave and affordable early childhood learning opportunities, and increase career mobility and enable skill acquisition across the career pathway.

## Theme 3: Prioritize key industry clusters

### Supporting the evolution of Illinois's established industries.

To move Illinois toward a more prosperous future and maintain its competitive edge, the state needs to focus resources and attention on the highest-potential sectors. Illinois can support the



evolution of some of its historically important industries as they evolve. For example, the state could capitalize its central location and diverse transportation infrastructure to develop into an innovative, multimodal transportation hub. Other important sectors to consider could include industrials, advanced manufacturing, and financial services, e.g., insurance sector.

#### Continuing investment in growth industries.

At the same time, Illinois can continue to invest in growth industries. One initiative could be to create a biotechnology and life sciences district. This center could build on the diversity of biotechnology companies in the state and become a hub that would be integrated with regional life sciences organizations throughout the state. Other growth industries that could also be developed include financial and software technology.

#### Investing in all regions of the state.

Outside of technology, the state can leverage and integrate existing sectors across regions. The agricultural sector can benefit from diversifying production with tools such as agricultural technology and specialty crop production. The state can also support rural communities working to grow the clean energy industry, explore industrial hemp, and attract data center companies.

### Theme 4: Spur innovation and entrepreneurship

#### Broadening opportunities to fund innovation.

The first opportunity to encourage Illinois-based innovation and entrepreneurship could be increasing investments for research and innovation, which includes corporate, university, small business, and federal efforts. Examples could include awarding state matching grants for federal research awards, or creating a statewide Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. As research insights and ideas become commercialized through start-ups, Illinois could consider creating a seed fund to co-invest in start-ups and help new businesses survive the first few years of operation.

#### Expanding and establishing physical infrastructure for research and innovation.

Illinois entrepreneurs also need infrastructure that supports research and innovation. One potential avenue may be to make use of existing and building new laboratory spaces in which to pursue early-stage research and workspaces for entrepreneurs and growth-stage companies.

#### Improving support and assistance for entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Because many entrepreneurs need to learn a wide range of skills as business owners, Illinois could better support them with training and assistance. The state could provide mentorship and technical assistance through incubators that support all entrepreneurial activities, including non-technological start-ups. Support could also include initiatives such as funding for a life sciences accelerator and grants to support training workshops. In addition, Illinois could explore ways to make it easier for young people to become entrepreneurs. An innovation work-study internship program could connect Illinois youth with young companies to match skills with labor needs.

### Theme 5: Foster an attractive business climate

#### Ensure funding and support and streamline bureaucratic processes for small businesses.

Illinois can adjust its business climate to make it more attractive for companies to invest in the state. The new administration can ensure streamlined funding and support for businesses of all sizes in the state. The state can identify opportunities and simplify the process to start, fund, and maintain a business in Illinois. Improvements include redesigning state processes to make

them more accessible—for instance, language in state publications and reference material can be rewritten to be easier to consume.

#### Enable and encourage testing of new goods and services.

Longer-term, Illinois could renew focus on creating a competitive and stable economic environment that encourages employers and entrepreneurs to invest in the state. For example, the state could create “sandboxes” for businesses.<sup>11</sup> Expanded policies will allow businesses in high-growth industries to partner with the state to test new goods and services. The state can further support these partnerships by creating a platform to encourage public discussion and input on new technologies, products, and services being tested and give regional and local leaders potentially useful insights.

#### Develop and implement state branding.

State-led initiatives could improve Illinois businesses’ prospects, but the state also needs to improve its reputation for being beneficial to businesses – both on a state-wide and region-specific level. The state should achieve this in collaboration with business, labor, and the government. To coordinate efforts, the new administration should consider building on existing efforts and streamlining efforts to work alongside corporate ambassadors to showcase the state and communicate aspirations. The state could also convene CEO and community roundtables to further common goals.

### Theme 6: Drive inclusive statewide economic growth

#### Leveraging Opportunity Zones as a tool to drive increased investment.

Economic growth for Illinois must include all regions across the state, not just the northeastern urban centers. A near-term priority may be to support the development of federally-designated Opportunity Zones in Illinois, which aim to attract resources and new investment to economically distressed communities.<sup>12</sup> The administration could identify even more opportunities to drive resources for Opportunity Zones by exploring federal and private-sector funding, including private-public partnerships.

#### Better connecting underserved communities to share ideas.

In addition to creating hubs of new investment and economic activity, the state should better connect underserved communities, to facilitate the spread of good ideas and create a way for community leaders to solve problems together. For example, the new administration could create an entity with regionally-focused offices throughout the state. Local offices can serve as full-service sources of technical assistance to entities involved with community economic development. Furthermore, the state could promote and consolidate statewide inventory databases showing existing and potential Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, and other high potential zones, enabling stakeholders to see a full picture of opportunities Illinois offers and be able to fill gaps.

#### Revitalizing and maintaining economic activity in town centers.

Illinois can invest in Illinois towns’ traditional downtowns to revitalize and sustain economic activity in town centers. For example, the state can renew funding for Main Street, a nationwide program that partners with community businesses to revitalize traditional downtowns and local

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<sup>11</sup> Regulatory sandboxes allow companies to test new products and services without full state licensure or approval.

<sup>12</sup> Opportunity Zones are state-nominated economically distressed communities where certain new investments may be eligible for tax advantages.

business districts.<sup>13</sup> As it rebuilds traditional town centers and local business districts, the state can work with local and program leaders to attract and retain residents to revitalized areas.

## Conclusion: Moving into a more stable economic future

Together, we believe these are some of the most important priorities for the new administration to consider as it creates better and more numerous economic opportunities for both workers and businesses. A few near-term priorities may be:

- Creating a database of existing career pathway programs to better coordinate and identify gaps
- Performing a review of state policies on starting, funding, and maintaining a business to identify barriers and opportunities for simplification
- Reviewing existing landscape of opportunity areas, including Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, and developing strategy for expansion

If Illinois leaders consistently work toward the state's economic development goals, the result will be inclusive, equitable economic prosperity.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/MainStreet/Pages/default.aspx>

## Transition Reports – Overview

Governor JB Pritzker and Lt. Governor Julianna Stratton are deeply grateful to the more than 400 Illinoisans from all over the state, representing both political parties, who served on 11 different committees to provide a diverse set of views about how to solve the myriad challenges facing our state. As part of the new administration's commitment to ensuring that every person has equitable access to opportunity and well-being, the transition committees also viewed their work through a racial and economic equity lens across state agencies.

Individuals who served on the transition committees represented their own views, and not the views of their organizations. The administration will consider these ideas and recommendations from the state's diverse stakeholders as we move forward.

- Growing Our Agricultural Economy | report | committee members
- Budget & Innovation | report | committee members
- Committee on Equality, Equity, and Opportunity | report | committee members
- Educational Success | report | committee members
- Healthy Children and Families | report | committee members
- Illinois' Emerging Leaders | report | committee members
- Infrastructure report | report | committee members
- Job Creation and Economic Opportunity | report | committee members
- Powering Illinois' Future | report | committee members
- Restorative Justice | report | committee members
- Veterans Transition | report | committee members

# Restorative Justice & Safer Communities

## Aspiration: Towards restorative justice

Illinois has the opportunity to become a national leader in the restorative justice movement. The Centre for Justice and Reconciliation “views crime as more than breaking the law – it also recognizes the harm caused to the people, relationships, and the community. So, a just response must address those harms as well as the wrongdoing.”<sup>1</sup> This approach to justice reform, equity, and opportunity creation can help avoid the entry of individuals into the criminal justice system, utilize alternatives to incarceration, effectively re-integrate formerly incarcerated persons into society, rebuild trust, and repair damage to affected communities.

With the new administration utilizing a restorative justice approach, we have the opportunity for transformational reform. This administration, with the establishment of an office focused on restorative justice, can better align services and programming and transform coordination of justice related programs across the state.

## Illinois today: Need for transformational reform

Justice reform and public safety have become a growing concern at the local, state, and federal levels due to high levels of incarcerated individuals, high rates of recidivism, and the significant economic burden the current system imposes. In Illinois, the picture is a complicated one. Between 2014 and 2017, the state’s violent crime rate per capita increased by 18 percent, translating to an average of 154 violent crimes a day in 2016, 15 percent higher than the national average<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Illinois courts hear over 2.6 million cases<sup>3</sup>, incarcerating thousands of individuals every year. Today, there are approximately 50,000 adults<sup>4</sup> incarcerated in Illinois jails and prisons in addition to the almost 600 juveniles<sup>5</sup> in detention – a disproportionate number of whom are black and Latino individuals<sup>6</sup>.

Illinois has made strides in recent years, reducing its prison population by 15 percent in just the last three years. In the latest five-year period, recidivism in prisons dropped by over ten percentage points (FY10 exits to FY15 exits)<sup>7</sup>. Potentially contributing to that reduction are recent bail reforms — for example, Cook County significantly reduced pre-trial detention by over

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<sup>1</sup> <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/about-restorative-justice/tutorial-intro-to-restorative-justice/lesson-1-what-is-restorative-justice/#sthash.bchrkrN.dpbs>

<sup>2</sup> Illinois Crime Rates 1960–2016, Disaster Center; “Crime in the US”, FBI, 2017

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/AnnualReport/2016/2016\\_Statistical\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/AnnualReport/2016/2016_Statistical_Summary.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections, Annual Report FY2017

<sup>5</sup> Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, Illinois Juvenile Detention Data Report, 2016

<sup>6</sup> Illinois Department of Corrections, Annual Report FY2017; Approximately 70% of inmates are Black or Hispanic, as of June 30, 2017

<sup>7</sup> From 51.7% to 39.9%

[https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/Recidivism%20FY10\\_FY15\\_Trends.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/idoc/reportsandstatistics/Documents/Recidivism%20FY10_FY15_Trends.pdf)

twenty percent in 2017<sup>8</sup> — and a shift to evidence-based programming targeting people with the highest needs.

Even with these improvements, there is still more work to be done to tackle the underlying challenges. Approximately 90 percent of those detained in jail statewide have not been convicted of a crime and are presumed innocent, translating to more than 250,000 pre-trial jail detainees every year.<sup>9</sup> Nationally, it is estimated that of 100 individuals who have bail bond hearings, 34 are detained pre-trial due to an inability to pay cash bail.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, while 96 percent of incarcerated individuals will return to their communities,<sup>11</sup> almost 40 percent of them are expected to be reincarcerated in the following three years. Such high levels of incarceration create a burden on the state's resources. On average, incarceration costs taxpayers \$30,000 to \$50,000 per person each year.<sup>12</sup> When considering the opportunity cost of Illinois' prison population of 40,000 individuals and parolee population of approximately 25,000 individuals, the costs to the state's GDP can be even more significant. Beyond the monetary impact, when considering the impact on the individuals, especially incarcerated youth, there is a need for significant shifts toward restorative justice.

## The path forward

A more compassionate and empathetic approach to addressing the challenges facing the state's criminal justice system can significantly improve outcomes. We've identified several crucial components:

- Illinois can focus its justice reform on **public safety, courts, and rehabilitation**:
  - Coping with and preventing violence by treating gun violence as a public health concern, building skills in stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, correctional officers, violence interrupters) who interact with youth and other high-need individuals, and rebuilding trust in law enforcement within the communities.
  - Modernize courts and sentencing to divert people away from incarceration toward treatment, particularly youth, and focusing on repairing harm to victims.
  - *Focusing on evidence-based rehabilitation* efforts at prisons, jails and in communities to rehabilitate individuals and eventually reduce recidivism
- As the state considers moving towards **cannabis legalization**, we have an obligation to restore rights for individuals with legacy cannabis convictions while repairing harm to communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the unfair application of drug laws. Facilitating equitable access to business opportunities and economic prosperity arising from legalizing cannabis for underserved populations will be absolutely critical.
- As discussed by the incoming administration, **establishing an office to advocate for restorative justice and economic opportunity** (which could be called the Office of Justice, Equity and Opportunity). This office can set the long-term direction for state agencies in

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-cook-county-jail-under-6000-inmates-20171221-story.html>

<sup>9</sup> [An Examination of Illinois and National Pretrial Practices, Detention, and Reform Efforts](#), ICJIA

<sup>10</sup> Rabury, B., & Kopf, D. (2016). Detaining the poor: How money bail perpetuates an endless cycle of poverty and jail time. Northampton, MA: Prison Policy Initiative.

<sup>11</sup> *Illinois results first*, Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council.

<sup>12</sup> *The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers*, Vera Institute for Justice, February 2012, vera.org.

restorative justice, promote inter-agency collaboration, and help remove barriers to economic participation for individuals returning from incarceration.

This report outlines the committee's recommendations in each of the areas of focus below.

## Public safety, courts, and rehabilitation

There are multiple components to the criminal justice system – from law enforcement, courts, jails, correctional facilities, to re-entry in the community – that must all work cohesively together to achieve these goals. There are several potential areas of focus.

### **Coping with and preventing violence**

The state can help reduce violence in communities by strengthening existing safeguards towards gun violence prevention efforts, pursuing new safeguards, and investing in community resources to prevent crime. For example, increased regulations on gun dealers, stricter reporting requirements for lost firearms, and establishing stronger Firearm Owners Identification card (FOID) requirements (accounting for hate crimes, animal abuse, and domestic violence and expanding requirements to cover 3D-printed and “ghost” guns) could keep guns out of the hands of people likely to use them illegally. The state could also convene a multi-state task force to reduce the illegal flow of weapons across state borders. In addition, measures such as better allocation of police resources to every zip code and expedited forensics tasks such as DNA-evidence processing, rape kit administration, and ballistics testing could significantly improve violence prevention and resolution.

The state could promote grassroots efforts to reduce crime and prevent gun violence, such as expanding prevention programs and resources in the neighborhoods at highest risk for gun violence (e.g., funding grassroots non-profit violence prevention programs). Resources could be allocated to transformative “Community Justice Centers” to provide civilian responses to violent incidents, including giving civilians access to resources and referrals, and offering holistic support. Trust can also be strengthened between law enforcement and the communities they serve if Illinois State Police take a larger role in investigating “use of force” incidents.

Community-based organizations should also be supported by the state in their work to provide mentoring, tutoring, and job-search support. The state could empower local organizations to support people returning from incarceration, helping them meet their needs for housing, mental health counseling, job placement, and other social services.

### **Modernizing courts and sentencing reform**

Through thoughtful court and sentence reform, the state could move towards a system that reserves incarceration primarily for those who commit very serious offenses. The reform could focus on treatment and rehabilitation, while diverting individuals to alternative treatment centers (e.g., over 40 percent of admissions to Cook County jails were for drug offenses, many of whom could have been diverted to community drug treatment resources) and ensuring fairness and equity before and after trial.

To start, the state can increase felony thresholds for drug (e.g., Class 3 and 4 drug offenses diverted to drug treatment) and retail-theft offenses (e.g., raise retail theft threshold from \$300 to a higher level), which can mitigate the punitive nature of current sentencing guidelines and decrease the number of incarcerated individuals. For those already incarcerated, the state can

re-evaluate early-release eligibility to focus on rehabilitation. Potential initiatives could include bypassing parole and auto-expunging criminal cases for eligible cases (e.g., certain Class 4 felonies), using clemency power to commute certain sentences (e.g., incarcerated people in need of hospice care), and expanding eligibility for discretionary and reduced parole.

Prison population reduction strategies may be more effective when partnered with treatment through supportive transition programs that include housing and job placements. The state could mandate restorative justice as a holistic rehabilitative substitute for incarceration (e.g., pre-trial referrals to community centers for certain offense types). State agencies can support transformational alternatives to incarcerations by engaging community-based resources such as mental health and substance abuse treatment centers. As part of this transformation, key actors (e.g., judges, community residents, law enforcement, social workers) could be convened in working groups to recommend actions to protect and heal communities.

To ensure fairness and equity before and during trials, the state should facilitate equitable access to and adequate funding for resources such as public defenders. In addition, Illinois should reexamine current juvenile detention practices through trauma-informed ways (e.g., end detention for children under the age of 15) and end trial tax incentivizing pleas. The state could also examine current monetary bond practices and reduce or eliminate the use of fines and fees for offenses such as driving infractions. Finally, the state could eliminate automatic driver's license suspensions for court debt and make probation and parole less punitive and more rehabilitative by eliminating reincarceration for technical parole violations. These changes would significantly reduce the burden on affected individuals.

### **Focusing on evidence-based rehabilitation**

The state can improve recidivism outcomes by focusing on rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals and empowering relevant stakeholders to improve their interactions with high-need populations.

Rehabilitation based treatment across jails and prisons offers better outcomes for affected individuals. First, there could be focus on better access to rehabilitative programs for affected individuals in the system, particularly for incarcerated youth. Creating access to Medicaid and privately-funded substance abuse treatment and providing such access pre-release could ensure continuity of care. In addition, overall capabilities could be improved to diagnose and treat mental health and substance abuse issues. Programs could focus on behavior modification, workforce skill development and life skills support to promote effective re-integration post-release. For example, offering vocational skills training and employment placement opportunities while in prison could set up individuals returning to their families and communities for success. The state should also provide stable housing options, employment placement opportunities, and state IDs or driver's licenses, for all affected individuals upon release to enable better re-entry to community.

Rehabilitation efforts should be trauma informed and exist before, during, and after incarceration. Stakeholders (e.g., school officials, correctional officers, counselors) who work with populations with the highest need of rehabilitative interventions can benefit from efforts such as de-escalation training to improve interactions with individuals who have mental health and substance-use challenges. First, capabilities could be improved across the system in how we deal with populations with highest need of rehabilitative interventions, including building on existing gender affirming training in women's correctional facilities and education for law enforcement on firearm restraining order laws. Second, state employees can rebuild trust with



communities by taking courses such as social emotional learning (SEL) or racial culture awareness and applying them to their work in communities. Finally, IDOC can consider initiatives like creating a workforce development board that focuses on creating economic opportunities in local communities for previously incarcerated individuals.

## Cannabis legalization

With medical cannabis already legal, Illinois is considering moving towards cannabis legalization. The state can work to repair the harm to individuals and communities affected by a history of over-policing and unequal sentencing for drug offenses. There are several key initiatives that the state should consider.

### **Restoring the rights of affected individuals**

For individuals with cannabis convictions, the state could explore automatically expunging records to ensure everyone affected is reached. The state should also undertake the task of identifying the downstream effects of cannabis convictions and undoing their impact. The state could leverage the new Office of Justice, Equity and Opportunity (detailed further in this report) to identify and work to reverse eligible cases (e.g., more severe convictions that took into account a prior legacy drug charge), as well as prioritizing these individuals for treatment.

### **Equitable access to the legal cannabis industry**

The opportunity for black and brown communities to benefit from the legal cannabis industry is central to the next phase of cannabis legalization. The state can provide equitable access to the industry by fostering business and entrepreneurial equity with a licensing system that encourages diversity. Interested community members could develop their skills through business incubators that provide training, certifications, and other business resources for setting up and running a cannabis business.

Because black and brown communities can lack access to capital — especially for cannabis-related businesses — the state could offer financing and technical training to help under-represented communities participate more fully in the legal cannabis industry, potentially through community-based incubators. This administration should lead the development of these incubators and ensure the technical support and capital participation of existing medical growers and dispensaries as a condition for expanded recreational licensing.

### **Repairing damage to communities**

The state can repair some of the harm to communities that have experienced systemic disinvestment and rebuild trust by creating a local community task force that reinvests funds in the community (e.g., grants for black and brown business owners). Leveraging state and local committees that represent the perspectives and interests of marginalized communities could provide valuable input on how funds should be used. To encourage responsible cannabis use, the state can develop community-based programs to discourage underage use and implement cannabis abuse rehabilitation programs. Training and education for law enforcement officers on ways to address the legal use of cannabis could improve the way they respond to frontline incidents.

## The Office of Justice, Equity and Opportunity

The state could define and support adoption of a set of unified principles on how Illinois will address restorative justice holistically. A newly established Office of Justice, Equity and Opportunity could work across agencies and use data to support this vision, improve inter-agency collaboration, and remove barriers to full economic participation for affected stakeholders. There are several key initiatives that the state should consider.

### **Setting the tone with key principles**

The office could define a set of principles for itself and the entire state. Some of these principles could include:

- Treating violence as a public health issue that affects economic opportunities for individuals and communities
- Supporting collaboration, transparency, and equity statewide
- Committing to collaborating with communities of the highest need and ensuring their voice informs the actions taken
- Making evidence-based decisions and evaluations

### **Convening entities across the State to foster collaboration**

The office's first task could be to convene a group of local and state agencies that work in restorative justice including IDOC, DJJ, DHS, DPH, and county police departments. Convening power by itself may not be enough and this administration could consider providing additional funding authority through this office to drive accountability. The office should consider initiatives like creating a seamless case management system between local, state, and community-based organizations for better handoff, championing standardizing processes and systems across different agencies, coordinating research of evidence-based practices to support new policies and laws, and creating a central team that maximizes federal and grant based funding available to Illinois.

### **Build better capabilities across all criminal justice agencies**

Since this office is focused on outcomes, it could help ensure decisions across all criminal justice agencies are evidence based, data-driven, and leverage lessons learned from the past. To enable this reform, the office can help create a central data repository that promotes cross-agency collaboration through more frequent contact, information sharing, and visibility of opportunities for improvement. Over time, this data can be used for better decision-making through advanced analytics and to measure effectiveness of programs being delivered. In addition, the office can work with community-based organizations and provide technical assistance and mission support.

## Toward restorative justice, equity, and opportunity

There is a path forward to move criminal justice in Illinois from one of retribution to one of economic and community restoration. These efforts can enhance resource allocation, lower recidivism, and improve outcomes for incarcerated individuals. The state could consider launching a few initiatives in the near-term which could serve as important first steps:

- Increased regulation on gun dealers and establishing a multi-state task force to reduce illegal weapons
- Medicaid access to ensure continuity of care and targeted employment and housing support provided to all individuals pre-release from IDOC
- Creating a workforce development and vocational training programs to support rehabilitation at IDOC
- Mandating training courses (e.g., social emotional learning) for stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement, correctional staff) dealing with high risk population
- Increasing certain felony thresholds (e.g., for drug offenses, retail theft)
- Evaluate and recommend changes to monetary bond policies
- Create a data repository to be used across all state and local agencies

The work ahead will be challenging, but could help shift Illinois away from mass incarceration, allowing people to contribute to their communities, and repairing harm caused in marginalized neighborhoods.

# Serving Illinois' Heroes

## Aspiration: Improving veterans' lives through a holistic approach

Illinois should adopt a new mentality and creative strategic approaches for veterans' services that are grounded in the principle of serving the "whole veteran"—including the veteran's family—during all stages of their lives. Veterans deserve continuity of services and care, no matter what part of the state they call home, and no matter their race, gender, or sexual orientation. This care should begin before a service member is discharged as part of comprehensive, state-led transition services.

Once home, all veterans should be connected to the benefits to which they are entitled and receive assistance navigating the many services and programs available throughout the state. This should be facilitated by trained personnel and access to an up-to-date online information portal. In addition, concerted and innovative efforts should be made to contact veterans who do not opt-in to services and programs to make sure they are aware of what is available.

As a state, we must live up to our responsibilities to provide access to quality healthcare and secure housing throughout a veteran's lifetime, ensuring that all state-run veterans' facilities are safe and meet Illinois' health code requirements. Additionally, we have a duty to create the business and economic environment for veterans to thrive—not just survive—by reducing barriers to higher education, increasing workforce development training that prepares veterans for employment in a trade, and working to eliminate veteran underemployment through paths to sustainable careers.

Realizing these aspirations would help us achieve our ultimate goal of becoming the Midwest's leader on veterans' issues, and making Illinois the best place for veterans and their families to put down roots and build their lives after serving their country.

## Illinois Today: Strong foundations but missed opportunities

Illinois has a proud history of support for those who keep our country safe. The state boasts a large community of supporters for veterans, including active duty military members, reservists, and fellow veterans. In addition to the Illinois National Guard, Illinois is home to prominent national military stations, including Naval Station Great Lakes, Scott Air Force Base, and the Rock Island Arsenal. As of Fiscal Year 2016, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimated that nearly 650,000 veterans lived in Illinois, making us one of the top ten states that veterans and their families call home.<sup>1</sup>

Illinois has many educational centers, including colleges, universities, and trade programs that are committed to welcoming veterans. The Illinois Veterans Grant program provides the state's veterans with educational opportunities beyond those provided by the federal GI Bills.

Our state has an extensive network of Veteran Service Offices through the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), with over 60 offices at over 80 locations to help veterans obtain the benefits they have earned,<sup>2</sup> as well as multiple Veterans Assistance Commissions (VACs), which

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, "Veteran Population" (last updated Nov. 12, 2018), [https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran\\_population.asp](https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Ill. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, "Service Offices" (accessed Jan. 2, 2019), <https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/pages/serviceoffices.aspx>.

are distinct units of local government established under the Military Veterans Assistance Act and funded by counties throughout the state.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there is a strong state library system that can serve as a hub and facilitator of veterans programs in communities throughout Illinois.

Illinois offers a number of benefits to veterans to show our gratitude for their service and improve their quality of life, including a veteran's designation on Illinois drivers licenses and license plates; free hunting, fishing, and camping licenses; and property tax exemptions for disabled veterans. The State of Illinois also has a set-aside program with the goal of having at least three percent of the government's contracts awarded to veteran-owned businesses.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the resources offered by the state, there are many innovative private and nonprofit organizations located throughout Illinois that are devoted to serving veterans and providing them with dignity, care, and upward mobility.

Despite these strengths, Illinois veterans still face a number of significant barriers. Although there are many public and private resources and services available in Illinois, they are not effectively communicated to the veteran community and are thus underutilized. Departments and services are operated in silos—many veterans are unaware that they exist, and even those that do are frustrated by the number of hurdles that must be cleared to have all of their needs addressed.

Additionally, Illinois has fallen short in seeking federal funds to assist veterans, potentially leaving millions of dollars on the table every year. Indeed, we rank second to last in the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs list of states by veteran compensation and pension expenditures per capita.<sup>5</sup>

Some of these challenges have been caused by failures of the government to protect our veterans' interests. For instance, construction of a new VA home in Chicago was delayed over three years due to the state budget impasse, despite being two-thirds funded by the federal government.<sup>6</sup> Even more concerning, the tragic deaths of fourteen veterans living in the Quincy veterans' home were met with continued mismanagement and a failure to act with urgency.<sup>7</sup> Our state can, and must, do better.

Unnavigable bureaucracy, coupled with high-profile cases of failing our veterans, has left the community lacking trust and looking for leadership. The new administration has an opportunity to help right these wrongs and recommit the government to better serving our veterans. More importantly, however, it has the opportunity to restore trust with our community's veterans and their families, who should never have to experience such disappointment from the democratic institutions they fought to protect.

## Key Issues for Illinois' Veterans

Veterans face many overlapping and interconnected challenges. The new administration has the opportunity to address these concerns and should focus on the following critical issue areas:

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<sup>3</sup> 330 ILCS 45/0.01 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> 30 ILCS 500/45-57.

<sup>5</sup> Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2017, the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, Department of Veterans Affairs.

<sup>6</sup> "Dunning Veterans Home To Open in 2019 More Than 3 Years Late, Rauner Says," DNA Info (Feb. 15, 2017), <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20170215/dunning/dunning-veterans-home-open-2019-more-than-2-years-late-rauner-says/>.

<sup>7</sup> See "Lawsuit Alleges State Was Negligent in Veteran's Death After Outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease," Chi. Trib. (July 20, 2018), <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-quincy-veterans-home-legionnaires-complaint-20180720-story.html>.

## Theme 1: Redefining the role of the IDVA

The role of the IDVA should be redefined and modernized to best serve today's veterans, who have a wide and diverse array of backgrounds and needs. Over the past two decades, the IDVA has lost the trust of veterans and those who care for them for reasons both within and beyond the agency's control, including budget constraints and the budget impasse, excessive bureaucracy, ineffectiveness, lack of transparency, and scandal. While some of these issues cannot be changed by the IDVA or the executive branch alone, there are a number of reforms that can be undertaken to begin the process of earning back veterans' trust and transforming the agency into a proactive and dynamic champion for Illinois veterans.

Immediate recommendations include:

- Charging the IDVA with the mission of being a proactive and dynamic convener of information and organizations.
- Establish the Director of the IDVA as not only an institutional leader, but also as a spokesperson and voice for veterans throughout the state.
- Use properly collected state-level data to drive decision-making, and when appropriate, establish data-sharing practices with local government entities and other organizations that work in tandem with the state to serve veterans. Make appropriate data publicly available via accessible online tools while preserving the privacy of veterans' information.
- Improve the state online portal so it is a "one-stop-shop" of all information veterans need.

## Theme 2: Augmenting service coordination and delivery

Service coordination and delivery is the lynchpin of veterans' care, and any one missed connection can cause cascading effects for veterans across the state. One critical issue is the lack of communication between the IDVA, the county VACs, and veterans service organizations, and other state agencies, all of which provide services to veterans. Not only does the work being done in these silos need to end, but Illinois veterans desperately need one, centralized online portal to access up-to-date information on the services, care, and programs that are available in Illinois. The IDVA also should be able to effectively use social media as a communication tool to reach veterans in real time without unnecessary bureaucratic constraints.

To complement information available online, the IDVA should prioritize case management to connect veterans to services related education, employment and learning to market skills gained in the military, healthcare, housing, childcare services, custody assistance that prioritizes family reunification, disputing incorrect claims, and other needs. Case managers should be trained to recognize signs of distress, including risk of suicide, and informed of how to help in crisis situations. They can also be resources for the IDVA to gain greater understanding of the everyday issues veterans are facing and increase the state's responsiveness.

To further improve coordination of services, the IDVA can designate liaisons to help eliminate government silos and work across state agencies to coordinate services for veterans related to employment, licensure and credentialing, healthcare, housing, and education. The IDVA should also conduct a statewide service assessment to identify clusters of veterans who do not have access to services within an hour's drive in order to better understand how to optimize service delivery.

As much as we need to improve coordination within the state, the new administration should also prioritize working with our federal partners to bring funds back to Illinois. We currently rank 52 out of 53 states and territories for per capita compensation for veterans' issues from the federal government, which means we're potentially leaving millions of dollars on the table every year.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the state should designate a federal liaison role within the IDVA in charge of working with federal partners on new funding and program opportunities.

As the new administration considers improvement to service coordination and delivery, there are three important sub-categories that should also be included:

*Transition services:* When service members return home, there is a significant lack of planning and coordination on the state's part to re-orient them to civilian life and take into account the variety of challenges returning service members face, including continuing their education, finding a job and building a career, reintegrating with partners and children, securing housing, and managing their physical and mental health. The state has an important role to play in both delivering some of these services and facilitating access to other existing services and programs, first when a service member initially returns home, but also later as they transition through different stages of their lives.

Currently, the state does not have a reliable way to contact returning service members. The new administration should coordinate with federal partners to work with the Department of Defense to receive contact information for returning service members sooner, ideally ninety days prior to discharge. This information should include emails and phone numbers, not home addresses, which are often inaccurate.

The IDVA should also be a resource for the families of veterans and be able to direct family members to programs and organizations that support them through the transition that they undergo when their veteran returns home.

*Health care:* The state's role in providing access to healthcare is primarily as a facilitator. Federally accredited and state trained Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) located throughout the state assist veterans in filing claims for federal benefits, which include health insurance and access to healthcare at VA hospitals. However, there are major disparities between access to care in rural versus urban parts of the state, and many existing services in central and southern Illinois are not strategically co-located with veterans. There are additional transportation challenges that impede access to care and discourage veterans from seeking it in the first place.

Actions by the new administration can include: seeking federal funding to increase the number of VSOs in the state to better serve veterans regionally; expanding the use of telehealth through existing federal programs that provide internet tablets to veterans, and working with federal partners to increase medical reimbursement rates to allow veterans access to civilian healthcare, which is sometimes closer to where veterans live.

Suicide is also a serious concern for veterans. Veterans are twice as likely to die of suicide compared to non-veterans, with female veterans dying by suicide at six times the rate of female non-veterans.<sup>9</sup> This issue continues at varying rates long after veterans return home and is known to spike at different junctures for men and for women. Understanding that veteran suicide is a

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<sup>8</sup> Id. at n.5.

<sup>9</sup> Illinois General Assembly Veteran Suicide Task Force Final Report at 12 (Dec. 1, 2016), available at [http://www.ildistrict84.com/uploads/6/7/1/1/6711327/final\\_report\\_vst\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.ildistrict84.com/uploads/6/7/1/1/6711327/final_report_vst_pdf.pdf).

complex issue with no easy answers, it is imperative that Illinois take a proactive approach, grounded in empathy and raising public awareness, that works to show our veterans that they are not alone and provide them with the help they need.

*Housing:* All veterans deserve to live in safe and secure permanent housing. This means eliminating veteran homelessness and completing construction of the Chicago Dunning Veterans' Home. The state should also expand permanent supportive housing with a greater focus on keeping families together, and make sure veterans know how to access these and other housing assistance options. It is equally important to support veterans' long-term financial health by creating pathways to home ownership.

Finally, the new administration should take responsibility for ensuring that all state-run veterans' facilities are up to code and safe for residents so that these veterans can live happy and fulfilled lives there without relatives fearing for their wellbeing. To do so, the state should assess the health and safety of current state-run veteran's facilities and determine a timely remediation plan.

### Theme 3: Creating and supporting economic opportunity for veterans

Creating and supporting economic opportunity for veterans is one of the most important ways we have to welcome veterans home and reintegrate them into civilian life. The new administration's goal should be to make Illinois a top-ranking choice for veterans to gain additional education, learn trades, start careers, and build businesses. Right now, there are barriers in place that hamper veterans' economic potential, such as a difficult-to-navigate college credit system that has different rules at each state university or community college; workforce development training that does not always strategically align with growing and/or sustainable industries that have permanence and longevity; and limited resources for veteran entrepreneurs. Reducing these barriers and creating opportunities for veterans to mentor, support, and hire other veterans should be top priorities going forward.

To increase educational opportunities, the new administration should work with state universities to strengthen the Illinois Veteran Grant and explore ways for veterans to share the benefits of the grant with dependents. The administration should also work with state universities, community colleges, the Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board to transfer military experience to college credit consistently across institutions. Additionally, the state should work with post-secondary institutions to offer programs for graduating veterans on what to expect post-college.

To improve employment outcomes for veterans and decrease veteran under-employment, the IDVA should work with employers to create pipelines to key industries with sustainable jobs that can grow into careers. These include the building trades, manufacturing, logistics, cannabis, clean energy, and agriculture. Workforce development opportunities should be brought to Illinois, including ones that receive federal support, and the state should work with employers to educate them on the benefits—financial and otherwise—of hiring veterans. The state should also promote existing programs that fast-track licenses and certifications for CNAs, EMRs, EMTs, CDLs, state police, and firefighters and track how many veterans take advantage of these options.

Illinois should encourage veteran entrepreneurship by revisiting the state procurement goals for hiring veterans to narrow exemptions, including for professional services, and hold Chief Procurement Officers accountable for these requirements, including through ending the overuse of emergency procurements. The IDVA can also encourage entrepreneurship by promoting small



business incubators and connecting veteran business owners to each other and to aspiring veteran entrepreneurs.

#### Theme 4: Thoughtfully supporting historically underserved veterans

Supporting historically underserved veterans should be a core mission for the new administration. Underserved veterans include minority, women, and LGBTQ veterans, undocumented veterans, incarcerated veterans, and veterans with an Other than Honorable discharge. Minority, women, and LGBTQ veterans are more likely to experience discriminatory violence, trauma, and military sexual trauma, which subsequently contributes to behavior that leads to receiving an Other than Honorable discharge, substance use, job loss, homelessness, and incarceration.

A service member can be discharged with an Other than Honorable discharge, otherwise known as having "bad paper," for a wide range of behavior, including assault and felonies, but also DUI's, drug use, identifying as LGBTQ under Don't Ask Don't Tell, and even mental trauma from being the victim of a sexual assault.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the crime, once a veteran has "bad paper," they are permanently cut off from the benefits and services to which other veterans are entitled. The only recourse they have is to request and be granted an upgrade to their discharge status, which is a challenging legal process. The result is that people suffer for decades from both stigma and lack of services because of personal identities that have no bearing on their professional conduct or decisions they made in their youth that are often linked to PTSD, traumatic brain injury, or military sexual assault. Furthermore, we know that minority veterans are more likely to receive less than honorable discharges, and veterans with bad paper are at higher risk for homelessness and suicide.<sup>11</sup> Under the Illinois Human Rights Act, Illinois is one of the few states that has prohibited by law hiring discrimination based on military discharge status.<sup>12</sup> However, this alone does not address the root causes for these individuals.

To ensure the dignity of all of our state's veterans, Illinois should assist qualifying veterans to upgrade their discharge statuses and act boldly to provide vital services to all veterans, regardless of discharge status. The new administration should establish a program with the Attorney General's office in conjunction with programs at Illinois law schools to assist veterans looking to upgrade their discharge status. Additionally, Illinois should consider becoming the first state after Connecticut to adopt a trailblazing program in which veterans whose other than honorable discharge is linked to PTSD, brain injury, or sexual assault would newly qualify for state health care and benefits, including tuition to state schools.<sup>13</sup> Not only would adopting such a program dramatically impact the lives of veterans whose bad paper can be linked to experiencing prior trauma, but it would signal that Illinois is taking a national leadership role on veterans issues. Along these lines, the state should also consider allowing veterans with other than honorable

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<sup>10</sup> "What Happens When a Veteran's Discharge is Less than Honorable?," Nat'l Veterans Foundation (Jan. 25, 2017), <https://nvf.org/less-than-honorable-discharge/> (citing that, although the military has recently implemented reforms, "[o]ver a period of years, male and female victims of MST (military sexual trauma) have received Other than Honorable discharges or diagnoses of mental illness.").

<sup>11</sup> "How to Find an Ex-Military Discharge Status," Houston Chron. (June 29, 2018), <https://work.chron.com/exmilitary-discharge-status-20063.html>; "Bad Discharges=Homeless Veterans?," San Diego Union-Trib. (Aug. 26, 2015), <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/military/sdut-homeless-veterans-discharge-study-2015aug26-story.html> ("Among VA patients who served in Iraq or Afghanistan between 2001 and 2011, 5.6% were discharged for misconduct. Yet these patients accounted for 28.1% of veterans who had been homeless within their first year out of the military, the analysis found.").

<sup>12</sup> 775 ILCS 5/1-101 *et seq.*

<sup>13</sup> See Connecticut Public Act 18-47, available at <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/act/pa/pdf/2018PA-00047-R00SB-00284-PA.pdf>.

discharges to become VSOs, which would increase employment opportunities for veterans with bad paper and allow them to be a greater part of the larger veterans' community.

Other veteran populations also need assistance. Undocumented veterans should receive help gaining citizenship because no person who has served our country in the military should ever be deported. Illinois should continue to strengthen protections for undocumented residents as a welcoming state, and the new administration should work with our federal partners to achieve comprehensive immigration reform.

Incarcerated veterans are also historically underserved. Veterans who are transitioning out of prison become eligible for their benefits upon release but often need help applying for them during the re-entry process. Case managers are needed to coordinate incarcerated veteran reentry and mental health services with parole officers, the IDVA, VSOs, and social service organizations to put these veterans on a good path and prevent recidivism.

Women and LGBTQ veterans face unique challenges related to being accepted, respected, and valued by the veteran community and at veteran events. This ostracization can compound other underlying issues and lead these veterans to experience depression or harm themselves. The new administration has an opportunity to highlight these individuals and let their stories be heard as equally deserving of our state's recognition and gratitude. The state should also strengthen VSO recruitment and training to reflect the diversity of the veteran population they serve and improve interactions.

### Conclusion: Setting veterans up for success

Illinois veterans deserve the best from us, and we have outlined recommendations that we believe would make Illinois' veterans services among the highest quality in the nation. In particular, we have identified the following areas as urgent priorities:

- Improve information-sharing with veterans via VSOs, case managers, and better online resources.
- Create better economic opportunities for veterans by increasing access to education, workforce development, and building pipelines to sustainable jobs.
- Prioritize extending vital services to all historically underserved veterans.

Taken together, these actions will make Illinois an ideal home for returning service members to come back to and build healthy and happy lives with their families.