BUILDING A PATHWAY TO DIGNITY & WORK

ILLINOIS COMMISSION ON THE ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

POVERTY ELIMINATION STRATEGY

DECEMBER 2010

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Pat Quinn
GOVERNOR

Dear people of Illinois,

The Preamble of the Illinois Constitution seeks to "eliminate poverty and inequality" in our state, and as the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty submits its report, I applaud their hard work towards accomplishing that important objective. I am encouraged by the commission's recommendations to improve the lives of everyone in Illinois who is living in poverty, and particularly those living in extreme poverty.

Recently-released data by the American Community Survey shows that poverty across the nation is on the rise. According to ACS, the poverty rate in Illinois rose 24 percent from 1999 to 2009. In 2009, the poverty rate in Illinois was 13.3 percent, up from 12.2 percent in 2008 and 10.7 percent in 1999. That means there were 1,677,093 individuals living in poverty in 2009 in Illinois. It also reported that those living in extreme poverty (income levels at 50 percent or less than the federal poverty level) grew from 5.4 percent in 2008 to 6 percent in 2009. These alarming trends show the importance of addressing the causes and effects of poverty quickly.

I am encouraged by the commission's work to examine poverty as a human rights issue, since every individual deserves to have their basic needs met in food, shelter and human services. Additionally, the commission diligently sought the input and participation of individuals currently living in poverty for this report, and I am confident that the commission members will continue to do so as they proceed with their important work.

I look forward to reviewing the commission's report and continuing to work with stakeholders in the public, private and non-profit sector to confront poverty and extreme poverty in Illinois. I encourage the people of Illinois to review this report, provide feedback and get involved in the process to improve the livelihood of our fellow citizens. I am hopeful that the work of the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty will provide a roadmap to bringing about lasting change and end poverty in Illinois.

Sincerely,
Governor Pat Quinn

LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION CO-CHAIRS

To the residents of Illinois,

We can eliminate poverty.

This plan lays out the steps the State of Illinois can take to cut extreme poverty in half by the year 2015. By adopting and implementing the recommended policy changes herein, we, as a state, can not only achieve that goal, but exceed it.

We commend our fellow members of the Commission on the Elimination on Poverty, as well as the many individuals that participated in the working committees, for their dedication to crafting a plan that is consistent with international human rights standards and builds a true path to dignity and work. We also extend special thanks to all the residents of Illinois, particularly those that are experiencing poverty, who participated in the public hearing process lending their voice and ideas to this important process.

While the commission has worked over the last year to develop this blueprint for Illinois, the real work begins now.

Now is the time we begin to improve access to crucial supports that stabilize families and individuals. Now is the time we re-invent the linkages between these supports and jobs. Now is the time we ensure that a job means you no longer experience extreme poverty.

Working together with members of the legislature, state agencies, faith communities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and residents in our state we must roll up our sleeves and incrementally put the pieces of this plan in place. Every day, there are practical steps we can take in our homes, our communities, our state, and our country to help move closer to this goal and provide a clear path to dignity and work for those experiencing extreme poverty.

With this plan, we are taking the first steps down an important path. We look forward to working with you in the months and years to come to achieve our collective goal on eliminating poverty.

Sincerely,

Dr. Toni Irving
Commission Co-Chair

Rev. Dr. Sid L. Mohn
Commission Co-Chair

Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of the Governor

President
Heartland Alliance for
Human Needs & Human Rights

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 • *Executive Summary*

7 • *What is the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty?*

10 • *Human Rights & Poverty*

12 • *Understanding Extreme Poverty in Illinois*

20 • *Building a Pathway to Dignity & Work: The Recommendations*

30 • *Beyond the State – Role of other Sectors*

32 • *Work Plan*

34 • *Appendix*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The absence of human rights is the cause of poverty.

Working from this premise, the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty has developed a comprehensive list of substantive recommendations that will allow the state to cut extreme poverty in half by the year 2015.

Currently, there are almost 760,000 individuals in extreme poverty living in every corner of Illinois.[1] Approximately half of those in extreme poverty are individuals that cannot or are not expected to work, including seniors, people with severe disabilities, and children. The other half of this population is those that can work with the right opportunities.[2]

The commission, which first met in the fall of 2009, has done its work over the last year in accordance with international human rights standards, ensuring all that both the process and the end product are consistent with these principles. This guidance, combined with an understanding of who is experiencing extreme poverty, drove the commission to form three working committees – Living with Dignity, Making Work Accessible, and Making Work Pay. These committees allowed for a person-focused process to develop recommendations that would help individuals move out of extreme poverty.

With the state's current fiscal situation, the commission recognizes that its recommendations need to be sensitive to the state's current revenue constraints and spending obligations. Initial changes should not add to the state's budget difficulties. As the commission advocates for the incremental adoption of its recommendations until 2015, it will make adjustments in the implementation of this plan that reflect the changes and opportunities that will be encountered during that time.

Furthermore, we must make every effort to ensure current programs and resources that keep thousands from entering extreme poverty remain in place. It is vital that in times of both stagnation and growth, that protecting and realizing the rights of the most vulnerable in our society through adequate funding of safety net and workforce programs is a core priority of our government.

Through a series of discussions and public hearings, the commission honed in on a set of recommendations that:

- Strengthen our safety net to ensure households and individuals have their basic needs met and their dignity affirmed.
- Create a true pathway to work for those that have been detached from the work force and need hard and soft supports to be successful.
- Ensure that when someone is engaged in work, they are not living in extreme poverty.

Specific recommendations include:

- Establishing a statewide transitional jobs program that provides work for those that have been detached from the workforce and need supports, including opportunities to improve literacy skills, to achieve long-term job success.

- Supporting the Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Initiative in Illinois. This strategy helps states increase access to SSI/SSDI, which are critical supports for people who are experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Increasing the percentage of individuals eligible for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program that utilize the program through targeted outreach, infrastructure improvements, and a shift to comprehensive case management.

- Expanding comprehensive scholarships to low-income community college students which combine "last-dollar" financial aid with student support services that include academic advising, mentoring, and tutoring.

Implementation of these recommendations, along with many others listed in the plan, will allow Illinois to reach the 2015 goal.

The effectiveness of this plan lies in the efforts made to incrementally adopt the recommendations. This effort must be taken on by this commission, but also by elected and appointed officials, stakeholders from across the state, faith based institutions, private sector partners, and those experiencing extreme poverty. In addition, while this plan focuses on state action, work must be done in communities across Illinois, as well as on the federal level, that will complement our work and respond to emerging needs.

This plan is just the first step. Implementing these recommendations, responding to emerging issues, and supporting changes that support individuals who are not in extreme poverty, but are still struggling, all lay in the future. In addition, the commission, through work with the Urban Institute, will release a report in the coming month that measures the specific impact on poverty reduction of a select group of its recommendations.

The commission is charged with issuing an annual report on the progress made towards the goals set out in the plan. The first of these reports will be due in the fall of 2011. In keeping with the commission's obligation to engage the voices of those impacted by poverty, a public hearing will be held prior to the drafting of this report each year to ensure the public's thoughts and voice are reflected in the assessment of the progress made and the changes that are suggested for moving forward with the important work of realizing human rights in Illinois.

WHAT IS THE COMMISSION ON THE ELIMINATION OF POVERTY?

"The purpose of the Commission is to comprehensively address poverty in Illinois consistent with international human rights standards."

-The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty Act, 20 ILCS 4080

The Commission's Charge

The preamble of the Constitution of the State of Illinois identifies the elimination of poverty as a fundamental goal of our state government.[3] However, until recently, there has been no comprehensive strategy to address poverty in Illinois. The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty was created in 2008 in an effort to fulfill our constitutional commitment to work towards the elimination of poverty in Illinois.

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty is an independent body in Illinois and is focused on eliminating poverty in our state in a manner consistent with international human rights standards. The Commission engages in two basic activities in an effort to address poverty in Illinois:

- Create and monitor a specific, substantive, measurable strategic plan for cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015 in Illinois.
- Offer advice and comment on state matters that may positively or negatively impact the state's goal of ending poverty.

In developing this comprehensive plan, the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty was required to address the following primary issues:

- Access to safe, decent and affordable housing.
- Access to adequate food and nutrition.
- Access to affordable and quality healthcare.
- Equal access to quality education and training.
- Dependable and affordable transportation.
- Access to quality and affordable child care.
- Opportunities to engage in meaningful and sustainable work.
- The availability of adequate income supports.

Membership

The Commission is comprised of members from the Illinois General Assembly, the Office of the Governor, and members of the public that represent different issues and constituencies that are relevant to addressing poverty. In addition, representatives from key state agencies and commissions serve on the commission in an ex-officio capacity.

Per the commission's statute, a steering committee was established, consisting of the commission's co-chairs, the chair of each of the three working committees, and two members at-large.

History

In December of 2006, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights initiated the From Poverty to Opportunity Campaign: Realizing Human Rights in Illinois. Working in collaboration with a coalition of community members, advocates, organizers, faith-based institutions, and policy leaders, the campaign advocated state-wide for an improved response to the growing problem of poverty in Illinois. In response to the efforts of campaign members and Illinois residents, Representative Karen Yarbrough (D-Maywood) and Senator Michael Frerichs (D-Urbana) introduced legislation to create the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty. In May of 2008, the Act was approved unanimously in both the Illinois Senate and House of Representatives, and the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty was established.

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty held its first meeting in October of 2009. Since that time, using human rights values and principles and a solid understanding of those impacted by extreme poverty to guide their work, members of the Commission have worked to develop a set of substantive, measurable recommendations that will allow the state to reach its goal of cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015.

Process

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty created three, person-focused working committees. These committees were charged with developing preliminary recommendations.

- Living with Dignity – Solutions for those unable or not expected to work
- Making Work Accessible – Solutions for those disconnected from the workforce
- Making Work Pay – Solutions for those engaged in work, but still experiencing extreme poverty

Each of these working committees was chaired by a member of the commission's steering committee and included both members of the commission, as well as individuals outside of the commission that could provide a certain area of expertise.

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty also held three public hearings throughout the state of Illinois (in Carterville, Danville, and in Chicago). During these public hearings, the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty asked Illinois residents to share their opinions about what the state of Illinois should do in order to reach its 2015 goal of eliminating extreme poverty in Illinois. These public hearings were conducted in an effort to ensure that the Commission's final strategy would reflect the real needs of individuals who are experiencing poverty and hardship in the state.

Relying on this public input, as well as relevant census data, and research, the commission's working committees developed a set of preliminary recommendations. In developing these recommendations, each working committee took the following criteria into account:

- The work, process, and recommendations are consistent with international human rights standards.
- The process takes into consideration all of the issue areas stated in the Act – food, health care, housing, child care, income supports, transportation, education & training, and work.
- The work is focused on the specific goal of the plan – cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015.

The commission's steering committee later compiled and organized the preliminary recommendations of the working committees, evaluating and adjusting recommendations in order to eventually select a set of recommendations that will most effectively respond to poverty in Illinois.

HUMAN RIGHTS & POVERTY

> *"Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights. And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights."*
>
> *-Kofi Annan*
> *United Nations Secretary-General*

As Americans, we place a high value on ensuring that everyone has opportunities to make ends meet and improve their lives. The failure to provide opportunity for all is in direct conflict with the fundamental values that the United States and Illinois—both the government and the people—have upheld throughout their history. From the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to our bill of rights, our American tradition upholds that everyone should have the opportunity to have a roof over his or her head, to put food on the table, and to give their children a chance at a bright future through education.

This tradition is the basis of international human rights standards. The international community, of which the United States is an active leader, drew on our American tradition of ensuring rights when it drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document speaks to the full breadth of rights that the global community should ensure all individuals are guaranteed. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."[4] In proclaiming these rights, the signers of the declaration, including the United States, recognize poverty as a human rights issue. This international standard serves as a model for the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty.

A human right is something that should be guaranteed, protected, and made available to all people just because they exist as people. It recognizes the inherent value in all human beings and strives to respect people from all backgrounds. By identifying poverty as a human rights issue, we recognize that the barriers to basic necessities such as food and shelter make it extremely difficult for too many Illinoisans to live with dignity. Apart from economic security, poverty can mean lack of access to social and political power in society.

Every human being deserves to have access to adequate amenities to fully achieve his or her potential, but these discrepancies in access are what produce poverty. These barriers often arise as a result of and perpetuate discrimination and social inequality and thus, require our immediate attention.

Addressing poverty as a human rights issue also means that we must employ human rights principles in our work. As such, the commission has worked to ensure that those impacted by poverty have been fully engaged in the process so that all human rights – civil, political,

economic, social, and cultural – are attended to and respected, and that specific, measurable plans are established to ensure the progressive realization of those rights.

The Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty has taken up this human rights issue because our state constitution strives to "eliminate poverty and inequality" and yet there is no organized effort in place to achieve that promise. Moreover, as noted in the commission's statute, the state has the same obligations as our federal government to abide by international human rights treaties that have been signed by the United States.

By focusing on this dire human rights issue in Illinois and through important collaborations among the private, public, and non-profit sectors, the commission hopes to achieve its goal of protecting the intrinsic dignity of the citizens in this state.

THE PROBLEM: UNDERSTANDING EXTREME POVERTY IN ILLINOIS

"Of all the things that could be done for a person experiencing poverty, we should start with hope."

- A.J. French
Carterville Public Hearing Testimony

As stated in the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty Act, "full participation in civic life cannot be achieved without those things that protect and preserve human dignity and make for a healthy life, including adequate nutrition and housing, meaningful work, safe communities, health care, and education."[5] The experience of poverty, however, often severely constrains access to these fundamental needs and places real limits on the opportunities available to individuals.

What is Poverty?

In the United States, when we discuss poverty we are typically referring to the official poverty measure as determined by the federal government. Established in the 1950's, our measure of poverty is based on an estimate of food expenses with annual adjustments. Individuals or families whose total yearly income (including cash benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and public assistance) falls below this threshold are considered to be in poverty.

2010 Federal Poverty Thresholds[6]

Persons in Family	Extreme Poverty	Poverty
1	$5,415	$10,830
2	$7,285	$14,570
3	$9,155	$18,310
4	$11,025	$22,050
5	$12,895	$25,790
6	$15,765	$29,530

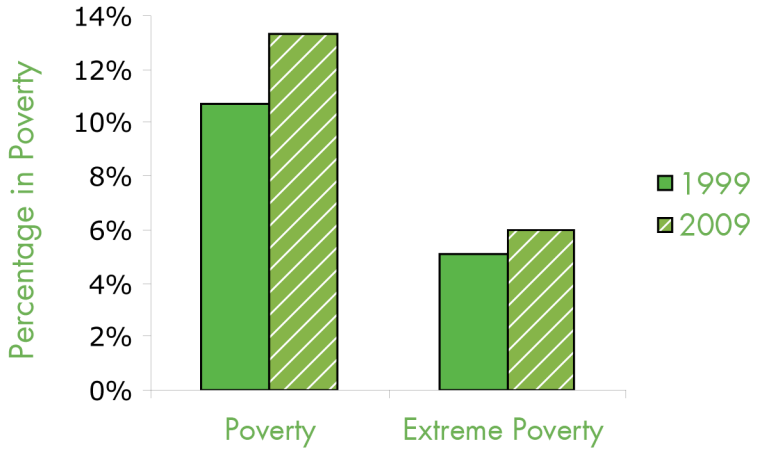
While this statistical measure is an important tool for understanding poverty, as well as determining eligibility for a myriad of state and federal programs, it is only one dimension of poverty. Broader definitions, such as the comprehensive measure discussed below, provide a different perspective on the economic realities of poverty. Still other measures, particularly those that look at human development and social inclusion, bring in other factors, such as the ability to engage in civil society, that allow for an examination of systemic issues that contribute to the state of poverty.

In human rights terms, poverty is a manifestation of a failure to uphold various aspects of the human rights spectrum. Civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights are all aspects of human rights, and the degree to which a given society has not realized any or all of these rights is evident in the number of individuals in that society who experience poverty. None of these rights are more important than any others. More importantly, they are all interdependent. The ability of a society to advance social rights is dependent on its ability to advance civil rights. Consequently, a human rights perspective on poverty requires a broad examination of all systemic barriers that impact the vulnerable.

Poverty in Illinois

Looking at the federal definition of poverty, in 2009, roughly 1.6 million Illinoisans were living in poverty. At least 759,761 of these individuals were living in extreme poverty.[7] The problem of poverty in Illinois, further, has worsened in the last decade. In 2009, Illinois's poverty rate rose to 13.3%, up from 12.2% in 2008. Likewise, the rate of extreme poverty in Illinois grew from 5.4% in 2008 to 6.0% in 2009.[8]

CHANGE IN ILLINOIS POVERTY



This significant increase in poverty in Illinois demonstrates our failure to adequately support individuals living in or at risk of poverty. Illinois's safety net, for example, now protects a smaller number of children from deep poverty than it used to. In 1995, Illinois's safety net moved 88% out of extreme poverty. By 2005, the safety net in Illinois lifted only 76% of poor children out of extreme poverty.[9] Our safety net also does less to protect unemployed workers from falling into poverty than it used to. In 1995, the safety net lifted 70% of extremely poor unemployed workers (who were looking for work in any given week) out of extreme poverty, but by 2005, the safety net only protected 60% of these workers from extreme poverty.[10]

Our support system is failing those who need it most, and as a result, the number of individuals and families living in poverty in Illinois continues to rise.

Expanded Poverty Measures

While the U.S. poverty measure provides a rough estimate of the number of individuals in the United States and in Illinois who are living in poverty, this measure provides only a limited understanding of the experience of poverty in the United States and in Illinois. Because it is primarily based on an evaluation of percentage of income spent on food, the federal poverty measure does not fully account for the cost of housing, health care, and child care.[11] These fundamental needs represent increasingly significant costs for individuals and families throughout the country.

A number of expanded poverty measures, however, do account for these additional benefits or expenditures in their assessment of the poverty level. For example, a poverty measure developed by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) accounts for child care expenses, the cost of housing, and taxes. This measure also accounts for non-cash benefits such as food stamps.[12] These adjustments in the evaluation of poverty in the United States and in Illinois may offer a more accurate picture of poverty.

In its efforts to evaluate and develop recommendations to respond to poverty in Illinois, the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty, working with the Urban Institute, is using an expanded poverty measure to evaluate the potential impact of policy changes on poverty in Illinois. This comprehensive measure is based on the NAS standard, and incorporates Illinois-specific rules and programs to reflect the specific needs of Illinois. In the coming months, the commission will release a report showing the impact of a subset of the recommendations set forth in this report on the extreme poverty rate in Illinois.

What is Extreme Poverty?

An individual or family whose annual income is less than fifty percent of the federal poverty line is considered to be living in "extreme" or "deep" poverty.[13] A family of four living in extreme poverty must get by on $11,025 a year or less.[14] To put this number in perspective, a family earning 50% of the poverty line brings home roughly $918 each month. The market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Illinois in 2009 was $893. After paying rent, a family of 4 living in extreme poverty is left with only $25.75 each month.[15] A family living in extreme poverty must use this $25 to pay for all of their other expenses, including food, utilities, clothing, health care, and other necessities.

Impact of Extreme Poverty in Illinois

Extreme poverty severely limits opportunity for individuals and families in Illinois. Individuals who are living in extreme poverty are more likely than others to suffer from hunger, poor nutrition, and poor health. Individuals living in extreme poverty are also more likely than others to live in homes with incomplete plumbing or kitchens, to lack health insurance, and be at risk of becoming homeless. For example:

- 34.5% of extremely poor households do not own a car.
- Roughly 4,000 extremely poor households do not have complete plumbing; almost 5,000 households do not have complete kitchens.
- Nearly one-third (31.4%) of people in extreme poverty are uninsured.

Extreme poverty in Illinois disproportionately affects children and individuals with disabilities.

- 7.8% of all Illinois children are living in extreme poverty. This amounts to nearly 250,000 children living in extreme poverty in Illinois.
- Similarly, 7.6% of Illinois residents who have one or more disability are living in extreme poverty.
- 14.8% of people living in extreme poverty have some kind of disability.
- 51.2% of people in extreme poverty are children, people with disabilities and seniors – groups not expected to work.

Extreme poverty also has a disproportionate effect on minorities. For example, African Americans are much more likely than others to experience extreme poverty. 14.5% of African Americans are living in extreme poverty, as compared to 3.3% of non-Hispanic whites.[16]

Working Committee Breakdowns

In an effort to develop recommendations that would address the kinds of challenges that are already known to place Illinoisans at greater risk for extreme poverty, the Commission on the Elimination of poverty developed three, person-focused working committees – Living with Dignity, Making Work Accessible, and Making Work Pay. These working committees were asked to develop preliminary recommendations to address the particular needs of individuals who are experiencing extreme poverty.

Living with Dignity

The Living with Dignity Committee focused on developing solutions for those individuals experiencing extreme poverty that cannot or are not expected to work, including seniors, those with severe disabilities, and children. Some of the topics covered by this committee included SSI and TANF, creating more access to food, as well as improving child health and nutrition.

Who are the People that Fall into the Living with Dignity Working Committee?

The Living with Dignity Working Committee focused on individuals with a work-limiting disability, seniors, and children.

PROFILE OF LIVING WITH DIGNITY POPULATION[17]

Living with Dignity Extreme Poverty Group	Number	What percentage of this group is in extreme poverty?	What percentage of people in extreme poverty falls into this group?*
Total Number in Extreme Poverty	690,764	5.5	100.0
Total Seniors (65+)	41,385	2.8	6.0
Total Children (0-17)	248,337	7.8	36.0
Total with One or More Disability	98,637	7.6	14.3
Gender			
Male	43,589	7.2	6.3
Female	55,048	8.0	8.0
Age			
Children (0-17)	13,755	13.0	2.0
Young Adult (18-24)	6,416	12.5	0.9
Other Adult (25-64)	57,359	9.7	8.3
All Working Age Adults (18-64)	63,775	9.9	9.2
Seniors (65+)	21,107	3.9	3.1
Race			
White, Non Hispanic	50,177	5.7	7.3
Black	36,614	14.9	5.3
Hispanic	7,542	6.3	1.1
Other	4,304		0.6

** All working committee data is from 2008. The 2009 micro data was not available in time for release of the plan.*

Marital Status & Presence of Children			
Male	43,589	7.2	6.3
-Married, spouse present	5,212	2.1	0.8
With own children	2,018	2.4	0.3
-Not married or spouse absent	38,377	11.0	5.6
With own children	2,475	7.6	0.4
Female	55,048	8.0	8.0
-Married, spouse present	4,522	2.4	0.7
With own children	1,354	2.6	0.2
-Not married or spouse absent	50,526	10.2	7.3
With own children	13,759	9.7	2.0
Educational Attainment (Age 25 and over)	78,466	6.9	11.4
Less than HS	25,294	9.3	3.7
HS diploma or equivalent	28,403	6.6	4.1
Some college or associates	18,823	6.6	2.7
Bachelors or higher	5,946	4.0	0.9
Single parents with no other adult in the home with kids under age 18…	50,745	18.8	7.3
-at least one of whom has any disability	5,163	20.6	0.7
-at least one of whom has a vision, hearing, physical, or personal care disability	2,373	22.1	0.3

Making Work Accessible

The Making Work Accessible Committee worked to develop recommendations to respond to the needs of individuals re-entering from the prison system, individuals who are chronically homeless, and individuals who have been disengaged from the workforce due to other barriers. Some of the issues addressed by this working committee included job readiness and job placement assistance, transitional jobs, English as a Second Lanuage (ESL), skill development, and child care.

Who are the People that Fall into the Making Work Accessible Working Committee?

The Making Work Accessible Working Committee looked at the those individuals that are of working age, have no work limiting disability, and worked less than half the year.

PROFILE OF MAKING WORK ACCESSIBLE POPULATION [18]

Making Work Accessible Extreme Poverty Group	Number	What percentage of this group is in extreme poverty?	What percentage of people in extreme poverty falls into this group?
Total Number in Extreme Poverty	690,764	5.5	100.0
Total All Working Age Adults (18-64)	401,042	5.1	58.1
Not in school, worked less than half the year	253,991	15.3	36.8
Has no disability	199,045	15.5	28.8
Work Experience			
0 weeks worked	146,654	16.4	21.2
1 to 13 weeks worked	34,779	17.4	5.0
14 to 26 weeks worked	17,612	9.2	2.5
Educational Attainment			
Less than HS	54,249	24.0	7.9
HS diploma or equivalent	80,725	17.9	11.7
Some college or associates	42,273	13.4	6.1
Bachelors or higher	21,798	7.4	3.2
Gender			
Male	75,182	17.0	10.9
Female	123,863	14.6	17.9
Race			
White, Non Hispanic	81,377	10.9	11.8
Black	69,107	29.2	10.0
Hispanic	39,824	17.9	5.8

Age			
18-24	40,893	23.2	5.9
25-34	58,400	21.7	8.5
35-44	39,264	14.5	5.7
45-54	36,428	14.8	5.3
55-64	24,060	7.4	3.5
Household Head Status			
Not head of household	98,117	11.7	14.2
Head of household	100,928	22.6	14.6
No other adult in the household	60,528	43.9	8.8
Number of children in such households	56,788	n/a	8.2

Making Work Pay

The Making Work Pay Committee worked to develop solutions for those currently in the workforce, but are not making enough money to climb out of extreme poverty. The recommendations developed by this committee were intended to support immigrants, minimum wage workers, and individuals in need of additional training. Solutions put forward by this committee included education and training, developing better jobs and career ladders, access to income supports – particularly Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly known as food stamps), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Who are the People that Fall into the Making Work Pay Working Committee?

The Making Work Pay Working Committee focused on those individuals who are of working age, have no work-limiting disability, and have worked half of the year or more.

PROFILE OF MAKING WORK PAY POPULATION [19]

Making Work Pay Extreme Poverty Group	Number	What percentage of this group is in extreme poverty?	What percentage of people in extreme poverty falls into this group?
Total Number in Extreme Poverty	690,764	5.5	100.0
Total All Working Age Adults (18-64)	401,042	5.1	58.1
Work Status			
Worked over half the year	69,309	1.2	10.0
Worked full-time, year-round	14,256	0.3	2.1
School Enrollment			
In school	19,870	3.5	2.9
Not in school	49,439	0.9	7.2
Educational Attainment			
Less than HS	11,376	2.5	1.6
HS diploma or equivalent	20,185	1.3	2.9
Some college or associates	28,366	1.5	4.1
Bachelors or higher	9,382	0.5	1.4
Gender			
Male	24,680	0.8	3.6
Female	44,629	1.6	6.5
Race			
White, Non Hispanic	42,123	1.1	6.1
Black	15,768	2.3	2.3
Hispanic	9,701	1.1	1.4

Age			
18-24	26,547	3.9	3.8
25-34	20,576	1.5	3.0
35-44	10,546	0.7	1.5
45-54	6,979	0.5	1.0
55-64	4,661	0.5	0.7
Household Head Status			
Not head of household	22,786	0.8	3.3
Head of household	46,523	1.5	6.7
No other adult in the household	24,934	2.7	3.6
Number of children in such households	28,065	n/a	4.1

> *"I believe that we can create a poverty-free world because poverty is not created by poor people. It has been created and sustained by the economic and social system that we have designed for ourselves; the institutions and concepts that make up that system; the policies that we pursue."*
>
> *-Muhammad Yunnus*
> *2006 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building a pathway to dignity and work

The Poverty Commission's recommendations build a continuum that enables those facing extreme poverty to move to where their inherent dignity is affirmed.

For those where work is not a viable option – people with severe disabilities, seniors – we recommend making critical supports for income and health easier to access, so our society is doing all it can to protect our most vulnerable.

For those who can work with the right opportunities, our recommendations point towards revamping our state's supports so they not only help stabilize a family in need, but more importantly, connect them to the training and work opportunities that will allow them to move beyond those supports. We envision a system that has at its core respect for the assets and talents every individual brings to the table, and empowers those individuals to build on those assets so they can provide for themselves and their families. To do this work, we must make sure that those in need are accessing the programs we have established as a society to ensure no one is left behind. More importantly, we must ensure those programs meet people where they are at, providing the proper context and supports that will allow them to be successful.

For those engaged in work, but still experiencing extreme poverty, we recommend providing access to the skill building opportunities that will allow them to move into living wage work. Whether it be community based training programs or our state's community college system, we need to ensure those systems connect with those in the labor force that should be able to move to self-sufficiency.

The implementation of these recommendations cannot happen in a linear fashion. Different pieces of the puzzle will be put into place as the opportunity allows, but the final picture is one that embraces the human rights vision of this commission:

- Focusing on people, not on programs;
- Recognizing everyone has worth and a desire to contribute to the greater good;
- Treating all our residents as assets;
- Putting Illinois on the path to ending poverty as we know it and affirming the dignity of all.

Stage One Recommendation

1) Increase the percentage of TANF eligible individuals who utilize the program to 30% through targeted outreach, beginning with those families only utilizing the SNAP program.

   Rationale – Increasing the number of individuals that are already eligible for TANF that actually use the program is key to linking individuals into a system that will provide them with the fundamental supports and access to skill-building and work opportunities that will allow them to move beyond TANF eligibility in the future.

2) Become a 1634 State under the federal Medicaid statute.

   Rationale – This change would allow people who are found eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) by the Social Security Administration to be automatically eligible for a Medicaid card. By establishing this linkage, those with severe disabilities will have the complement of supports needed to allow them to live a life with dignity. This change would also reduce some of the administrative work for the Department of Human Services.

3) Support the Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSI/SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Initiative in Illinois.

   Rationale – SOAR is a strategy that helps states to increase access to SSI/SSDI for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through support and broader implementation of this strategy, the number of eligible individuals that are actually able to enroll in SSI/SSDI will increase, providing them with critical support that will bring them out of extreme poverty.

4) Adopt statewide Ban the Box legislation, which prohibits state job applications from asking if an individual has a criminal background, and use the state's leadership to encourage and promote the hiring of individuals with criminal backgrounds.

   Rationale – Those re-entering society after incarceration need true opportunity after paying their debt to society. With reasonable limits on some sensitive positions, eliminating a litmus test that automatically precludes the formerly incarcerated from being considered for employment in the state would have a dramatic impact on securing gainful employment and reducing recidivism.

5) Permanently eliminate co-pays for Child Care Assistance for families living in extreme poverty.

   Rationale – Co-pays create an unneeded barrier for households experiencing extreme poverty while engaged in work. The elimination of these co-pays will help these families use their limited resources for other needs and better allow them to stay employed.

Stage Two Recommendations

1) Increase comprehensive scholarships to low-income community college students which combine financial aid with student support services that include academic advising, mentoring, and tutoring.

   Rationale – The community college system plays an important role in giving individuals the skills they need to be competitive in the workforce and attain living wage employment. For those in extreme poverty, the costs of this investment are often cost-prohibitive. Providing comprehensive scholarships, coupled with soft supports, will give those in extreme poverty a real chance at self-sufficiency.

2) Increase by 25% the number of individuals experiencing extreme poverty that are directly impacted by Illinois Community College Board and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity programs through working with stakeholders to assess and implement changes, policies, and practices that lead to increased access.

   Rationale – Those in extreme poverty need to have a priority in our state's existing infrastructure for training and jobs. Through targeted adjustments in outreach and programming, the state can provide these individuals with the opportunities needed to fully engage in work.

3) Increase Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants by 15% each year until they reach 50% of the federal poverty line (FPL).

   Rationale – Current cash assistance under TANF is the equivalent of 27% of the federal poverty line.[20] Consequently, an individual enrolled in TANF is still in extreme poverty. For this assistance to effectively stabilize a family so they can gain needed skills and work experience, the state must raise the amount of assistance.

4) Ensure the state meets or exceeds the goal of expending 10% of its affordable housing development resources on housing for the extremely low-income.

   Rationale – The current state housing plan sets a benchmark of 10% of available resources for affordable housing development be used on projects that serve extremely low-income households. Unfortunately, the state has never reached this goal. By consciously developing strategies to ensure the state meets and, hopefully, exceeds the 10% mark, families in extreme poverty will have many more housing options.

5) Increase the percentage of individuals experiencing extreme poverty that participate in income supports programs by 30% by adjusting rules, policies, practices, and procedures that hinder the participation of eligible people in safety net programs and take effective action to remove these barriers. These actions include, but are not limited to: improvements in technology, both in terms of internal systems and user interface; continued changes in culture of service delivery that allow for true case management for those with the greatest barriers; changes to rules that make applications and re-certification simpler, allow for different safety net programs to more easily link together, and provide stronger linkages to appropriate work and training options that meet participants where they are at.

Rationale – Our income support programs should not only protect individuals when faced with hardships, but they should be designed to empower individuals to get back on their feet. We need to shift how we think about and operate our safety net programs so that we not only encourage those in need of supports to use them, but they are seen as a real tool for connecting to meaningful training and work opportunities. The goals of the programs and the goals of the individuals will be best met when we effectively use the tools at our disposal to re-shape the culture in our state to one that helps program participants realize their human rights.

6) Establish a statewide transitional jobs program that will engage 40,000 individuals each year when at full scale.

   Rationale – Access to work is dependent on having real opportunities that meet a person's current barriers and challenges. Transitional jobs are time-limited, wage paying positions with case management that provide those that have been detached from the labor market with the opportunity to build a work history and be successful on the job so they can move to being permanently in the workforce.

7) Triple the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) amount.

   Rationale – The EITC is a critical work support for low-wage households. Those in extreme poverty and working could see their Illinois EITC rise from $200 to $600 with this change.

Stage Three Recommendations

1) Assist low-skilled immigrants to create a practical career ladder by tying English instruction and vocational training to advancement within specific industries such as restaurants, hotels, tourism, and health care, through community colleges, trade schools, and community-based organizations.

   Rationale – Providing meaningful on-ramps to living wage work for immigrant communities requires and adaptations thoughtful incorporation of language development in skills training.

2) Increase the percentage of individuals eligible for TANF that utilize the program to 50% through targeted outreach, infrastructure improvements, including technology, and shift to comprehensive case management.

   Rationale – Building on the outreach and improvements in previous recommendations, serving this percentage of the population that is eligible will mean that we have an effective system for tying these individuals to work opportunities that will lead to living wage employment.

3) Increase the amount of rental subsidies available to those in extreme poverty, including seniors and people with disabilities through expansion of Illinois' Rental Housing Support Program.
   Rationale – Housing is the largest cost in any household's budget. Ensuring those in extreme poverty have access to housing they can afford not only relieves pressure on their income, but it provides their family with a safe, decent, stable home.

4) Authorize a program of general assistance for single adults that provides them with income support at the level of deep poverty.

   Rationale – In the matrix of supports for those facing difficult times, single adults have few options. Many of Illinois' townships currently operate a general assistance program that serves this population, but that network is currently unable to meet the need. A general assistance program for single adults that ties into work and training programs, in the manner the TANF program does, would give this specific population the support they need to be successful.

Income Supports Recommendations

1) Simplify the application form and process for obtaining a medical card and/or LINK card.

2) In 1994 Congress implemented TANF and required single women with children to work. While there was limited intitial success, the program largely failed due to its inflexibility and not being intensive enough to meet the needs of women with multiple disadvantages to employment. Women with children who are in charge of maintaining a family unit are paramount to the success of the program.

   To implement an intensive flexible program, additional funding may be necessary, unless current funding can be redirected to this area to provide intensive case management and to assist with keeping the family intact. Based on the redirection of resources, the cost could be reduced by that level of funding.

3) Align eligibility requirements for social services, which would allow residents to sign up for all applicable services with one application.

   Safety net programs, a crucial tool to keep families out of extreme poverty, are underutilized in Illinois. Most safety net programs provide support to less than half of eligible Illinoisans. Streamlining the application process for safety net programs would increase usage and help alleviate extreme poverty.

4) The State should support the SOAR Initiative in Illinois. SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) is a strategy that helps states to increase access to SSI/SSDI for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

5) Working with an agency whose mission it is to address human services, identify safety net/collaborative case management tools that are currently being used across the state, such as Service Point or Community Collaboration Inc., that identify in a virtual one stop shop all the agencies that are available as resources for clients. Network case managers in local areas so that they can refer, schedule appointments for clients and provide a collaborative case management tool to assist in addressing issues in a wholistic approach.

6) Support efforts for the creation of Community Resource Centers strategically placed to overcome transportation barriers. This work would not be provided by

the State but State agencies would be required to offer needed services at least one day a week in that community. Creating both physical and virtual resource centers in key locations across the state which hold clients accountable to follow through with a plan that they create would directly effect poverty. Key resources would be identified that are pertinent in given service areas and encouraged to participate.

7) Increase Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants by 15% each year until they reach 50% of the federal poverty line (FPL).

8) Identify rules, policies, practices and procedures that hinder the participation of eligible people in safety net programs and take effective action to remove these barriers. Undertake public education/awareness, outreach and enrollment campaigns.

9) Standardize work support application process and make it available online in order to help working families that are struggling stay above the poverty threshold.

10) Lengthen the redetermination period for SNAP beneficiaries and shorten the SNAP application.

11) Increasing participation in other nutrition programs such as School Breakfast and the Summer Food Service Program – both of which are largely funded by federal dollars – could help bring resources into communities struggling with extreme poverty that would take pressure off of family budgets. Given that having children is a predictor for living in poverty, it seems that focusing on programs that help address the needs of families with children would make sense.

12) Increase availability of mobile food programs (e.g. mobile pantries) in high need areas in the state – this could be particularly useful in the far southern regions of Illinois that experience high rates of extreme poverty as community agencies with food programs may not be located near them or in their community. Mobile responses can help to ensure that food can get into outlying communities when needed even if there isn't much organizational infrastructure on the ground.

13) Authorize a program of general assistance for single adults that provides them with income support at the level of deep poverty.

14) The State should become a 1634 State under the federal Medicaid statute. This change would allow people who are found eligible for SSI by the Social Security Administration to be automatically eligible for a Medicaid card. This change would also take away some of the administrative work from the Department of Human Services.

Housing Recommendations

15) Increase the amount of rental subsidies available to those in extreme poverty, including seniors and people with disabilities through expansion of Illinois' Rental Housing Support Program.

16) Coordinate funding for supportive services, operating subsidies and capital for the development of permanent supportive housing so that all supportive housing that is developed has all the requisite funding. In addition, the State should require that rental subsidies for people who need supportive services have a source for services attached to the subsidy.

17) Ensure the state meets or exceeds the goal of expending 10% of its affordable housing development resources on housing for the extremely low-income.

Children Recommendations

18) Protect, restore and enhance investmments in early childhood care and education to maintain and build on the successes of programs like Healthy Families, Early Intervention, Head Start, Preschool for All, and Child Care Assistance Programs. These programs are proven to increase a child's readiness for learning and promote family engagement and empowerment.

    Serve 198,000 kids in Preschool for All (about 35,000 in Head Start, and the remainder in state-supported Pre-K). As of Fiscal Year 2009, we were serving 130,000 kids under Preschool for All.

19) Protect, restore and enhance access to quality health care including mental health and social emotional well being. All Kids has reduced the number of uninsured children in IL to 6% and those children could be covered if they applied.

20) Build on and expand the work done by the Youth to Adult Partnership to allow emancipated and aged out youth served by Department of Children and Family Services to continue coverage of services as requested and needed. Recently enacted legislation provides this opportunity for emancipated youth but awareness and implementation procedures are under development and would benefit from increased support as a poverty reduction effort. One recommendation is to expand the current legislation beyond the age of 21.

Access to Work Recommendations

21) Adopt statewide Ban the Box legislation, which prohibits state job applications from asking if an individual has a criminal background, and use the state's leadership to encourage and promote the hiring of individuals with criminal backgrounds

22) Educate recipients of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and SSI so they know that they can work and keep medicaid benefits.

23) Establish a statewide transitional jobs program that will engage 40,000 individuals each year when at full scale.

Education Recommendations

24) Increase comprehensive scholarships to low-income community college students which combine "last-dollar" financial aid with student support services that include academic advising, mentoring and tutoring.

25) Create at least two dedicated workforce development staff positions at each community college throughout Illinois to increase student opportunities to secure employment upon completion of certificate or degree.

26) Direct the Illinois Community College Board and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to prioritize individuals living in poverty within their programs and work with stakeholders to assess and implement changes, policies and practices that lead to increased access.

27) Community colleges, trade schools, and community-based organizations should assist low-skilled immigrants to create a practical career ladder by tying English instruction and vocational training to advancement within specific industries such as restaurants, hotels, tourism, and health care.

28) Public and private funds should be increased to promote contextualized adult education and ESL classes for immigrants in order to both improve general English proficiency and acquire trade/skill relevant English as well.

Income Tax Recommendations

29) Triple the state EITC amount.

30) Provide free tax preparation services for low-income families.

Childcare Recommendations

31) Increase access to affordable child care for all low-income working families, with a special emphasis on those in extreme poverty.

32) Develop outreach strategies to target families in extreme poverty for the Child Care Assistance Program.

33) Eliminate child care co-payments for families in extreme poverty.

Work Recommendations

34) Increase access to unionization through changes in labor law that would ensure that workers had the ability to organize without threat of retaliation from employers.

35) Educate workers on their rights so that all workers will know what they are legally allowed to do and what employers are legally allowed to do (and not do).

36) Increase enforcement of labor laws.

37) Ensure that workers have protections against wage theft, including access to hearings and increased penalties for employers.

38) Explore immigrant exploitation/discrimination, and put structures in place to prevent such exploitation and blatant discrimination.

39) Increase standards and regulations of staffing agencies, protecting domestic/temporary/migrant workers from abuses and exploitation.

40) Adopt the Illinois Healthy Workplace Act that allows employees who traditionally do not have a right to paid sick leave (e.g. part-time employees) to accrue sick days.

41) Eliminate categories of low wage workers not covered by minimum wage, such as those receiving tips, race track handlers, and sub-age workers (below 18).

42) Improve workplace compensation by increasing minimum/living wage and benefit standards.

BEYOND THE STATE – ROLE OF OTHER SECTORS

> *"Where after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."*
>
> *-Eleanor Roosevelt*

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty is focused on ending poverty in Illinois, and it fully recognizes that this feat cannot be accomplished without collaboration with the federal government, local government, the private sector, and individual citizens. All of the aforementioned parties have invaluable ideas and resources that the state government will need to halve extreme poverty by 2015 and to continue down the path to fully eliminate poverty in Illinois in the future.

Federal Government

The federal government plays a critical role in addressing poverty. Many of the programs operated by the state that focus on serving vulnerable residents are funded by the federal government and operate within the guidelines they have established. It is essential that our partners on the federal level provide the state with the leeway needed to achieve our goals and focus their scarce resources on ensuring that those with the greatest barriers to employment and dignity have a real opportunity to succeed.

Local Governments and Community Members

Local governments understand the particular needs of their communities. Often times, the best solutions for poverty come from local innovation responding to an emergent need in an innovative way. The state needs to support these local efforts and learn from them, looking for opportunities to partner and lift up practical strategies that can be shared and utilized in other parts of Illinois.

Private Sector

The private sector plays a crucial role in lifting people out of extreme poverty and protecting others from experiencing it. Through providing decent wages, job training opportunities, critical benefits like health insurance and paid sick leave, and supporting the non-profit sector in their role in addressing poverty, the corporate community can both strengthen our economy and families at the same time.

Individuals

There are numerous ways each of us can help end poverty and further human rights. In our daily lives, are we treating all human beings with dignity? Are we willing to share our resources and support families in need? Being aware of the needs of our communities and treating people in poverty just as we would treat anyone else is key to the implementation of the Commission's goals.

THE WORK PLAN
2011 – 2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Child Care/ Children	Eliminate child care co-pays	Develop outreach strategies to households in need of child care	Build on and expand the work done by the Youth to Adult Partnership	Improve access to child care for more families	
Education & Training	Protect, restore, and enhance investments in early childhood education	Improve community college access Increase contextualized adult education and literacy	Increase community college scholarships	Improve English as a Second Language programming	Establish dedicated workforce development staff at targeted community colleges
Food & Nutrition	Improve SNAP determination and application	Increase participation in summer and school food programs	Establish mobile food pantries		
Housing		Targeted increase in affordable housing	Align funding for supportive housing	Expand the Rental Housing Support Program	

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Health Care	Automatic Medicaid eligibility for SSI recipients Protect, restore and enhance access to quality health care including mental health and social emotional well being	Support the implementation of the Statewide Health Improvement Plan	Protect, restore and enhance access to quality health care including mental health and social emotional well being (ongoing)	Support implementation of expanded Medicaid coverage	
Income Supports	Increase TANF enrollment to 30% Implement SOAR in Illinois	Continue simplification and infrastructure improvements to public benefits programs	Increase TANF enrollment to 40%	Increase TANF cash assistance level	Increase TANF enrollment to 50% Authorize general assistance program for adults
Work	Triple the state Earned Income Tax Credit Educate workers on their rights Increase enforcement of existing labor laws	Establish state-wide transitional jobs program Establish Ban the Box Ensure worker's protection against wage theft	Increase access to unionization Increase standards and regulation at staffing agencies Eliminate categories of low-wage workers not covered by the minimum wage	Increase the minimum wage	

APPENDIX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prepared by: *Anna Fehsenfeld, Doug Schenkelberg, and Jennifer Van Ee – Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights and Lory Mishra – Office of the Governor, State of Illinois.*

Data Analysis and Support: *Amy Rynell and Amy Terpstra, Social IMPACT Research Center of Heartland Alliance.*

Commission Staff Support: *Kimberly Drew, Anna Fehsenfeld, Lory Mishra, Nadeen Israel, Samreen Khan, Tim Klein, and Doug Schenkelberg.*

Layout and Design: 2046 Design | *www.2046Design.com*

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Steering Committee members are listed in **bold**.

Co-chairs:

Dr. Toni Irving – Senior Advisor & Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Rev. Dr. Sid L. Mohn – President, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights

Elected Officials and their Representatives

Michael Frerichs – State Senator
Carole Pankau – State Senator
Sandra Pihos – State Representative
Karen Yarbrough – State Representative

Public Members

Judson Childs – Mayor of Cairo, Illinois
Andy Davis – Executive Director, Illinois Student Assistance Commission
Zola Fuller – Citizen
Robyn Gabel – former Executive Director – Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition; current State Representative
Michael B. Golden – Co-Founder, Illinois Education Foundation
Jim Hires – Executive Director, Eastern Illinois Food Bank
Lanita Koster – Member, Illinois State Board of Education
Andy Kulczycki – Executive Director, Community Service Center of Northern Champaign County
Dwight Lucas – East Central Illinois Community Action Association
Eithne McMenamin – Senior Policy Analyst, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Cheri Neal Ditzig – Supervisor, Zion Township
Jonathan Perry – Board President, Park Lawn Association
Wendy Pollack – Director, Women's Law & Policy Project, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Al Riddley – Executive Director, Illinois Coalition for Community Services
Dan Schwick – Assistant to the President, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
Dennis Smith – Executive Director, Northeastern Illinois Food Bank
Maria Whelan – President, Illinois Action for Children
Diane Williams – President & CEO, Safer Foundation

Ex-Officio Members

Damon Arnold – Director, Illinois Department of Public Health
Andre Ashmore – Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
Brianna Baker-Carvell – Illinois Department of Corrections
Grace Hou – Deputy Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Charles Johnson – Director, Illinois Department of Aging
Mike Jones – Special Assistant to the Director for Healthcare Policy, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services
Amalia Martinez – Illinois Department of Human Rights
Frank W. McNeil – Deputy Director, Office of Affirmative Action, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Laurie Mikva – Illinois Department of Employment Security
Marisol Morales – Commissioner, Illinois Latino Family Commission
Michelle Saddler – Secretary, Illinois Department for Human Services
Terry Solomon – Executive Director, Illinois African American Family Commission

Working Committee Members

Living with Dignity

Chair: Dwight Lucas – Executive Director, East Central Illinois Community Action Association

Stephanie Altman – Health and Disability Advocates
Damon Arnold – Director, Illinois Department of Public Health
Karen Beyer – Executive Director, Ecker Center
Cheryl Boyd – The H Group
McFarland Bragg – Executive Director, Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity
Jackie Collins – State Senator
Sharon Hess – Executive Director, Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless
Grace Hou – Deputy Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Charles Johnson – Director, Illinois Department of Aging
Dan Lesser – Sargent Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Jim Lewis – Senior Program Officer, Chicago Community Trust
Rene David Luna – Access Living
Frank W. McNeil – Deputy Director, Office of Affirmative Action, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Marisol Morales – Illinois Latino Family Commission
Sandra Pihos – State Representative
Kathy Ryg – President, Voices for Illinois Children
Amy Rynell – Director, National Transitional Jobs Network and Social IMPACT, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
Michelle Saddler – Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Kelley Talbot – Policy Associate, Voices for Illinois Children
Tom Yates – Health and Disability Advocates

Making Work Accessible

Chair: Al Riddley – Executive Director, Illinois Coalition for Community Services

Scott Allard – Associate Professor, The School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago
Joe Antolin – Vice President, Heartland Human Care Services, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
Walter Boyd – Director, Ex-Offender Opportunity Program, Protestants for the Common Good
Kerwin Charles – Professor, The Harris School, University of Chicago
Shelley A. Davis – Instructor, The Harris School, University of Chicago
Lisa Dugan – State Representative
Cory Foster – Illinois Department of Corrections
Shelith Hansbro – Illinois Department of Corrections
Mary Howard – Chicago Housing Authority
Angel La Luz – Director of Operations, Greater Chicago Food Depository
Rachel McDonald – Executive Director, Central States SER
Rami Nashashiba – Executive Director, IMAN
Bob Palmer – Policy Director, Housing Action Illinois
Carol Pankau – State Senator
Jonathan Perry - Board President, Park Lawn Association
John Plunkett – Harbor Quest
Carrie Thomas – Associate Director, Chicago Jobs Council
B. Diane Williams – President and CEO, Safer Foundation

Making Work Pay

Co-Chair: Maria Whelan – President, Illinois Action for Children
Co-Chair: Trinita Logue – President, Illinois Facilities Fund

Mark A. Aguilera
Leslie Boucree – Chief of Legislative Affairs, Illinois Department of Human Rights
Andy Davis – Executive Director, Illinois Student Assistance Commission
Michael Frerichs – State Senator
Gina Guilmette – Director of Policy & Advocacy, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights
Ahlam Jbarra – Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Keith Kelliher – President, SEIU Healthcare Illinois
Lanita Kostner – Member, Illinois State Board of Education
David Lowitzki – SEIU Healthcare Illinois
Rosana Marquez – President and CEO, Eleanor Foundation
Laurie Mikva – Illinois Department of Employment Security
Ray Pendergast – Consultant
Gaye Preston – President and CEO, Community Support Services, Inc.
Guadalupe Preston – Director of Latino Community Relations, Catholic Charities
Bob Pritchard – State Representative
Stephen Raudenbusch – Department of Sociology, The University of Chicago
Angela Richardson – Education Organizer, Community Caring Conference
Julio Rodriguez – Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Juan Salgado – President and CEO, Instituto Del Progreso Latino

Public hearing Testimony

Susan Aarup
Nicole Amling – Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness
Lakisha Boens
Arick Buckles – Illinois Alliance for Sound AIDS Policy
Willie J.R. Fleming
A. J. French
Judith Gethner – Illinois Partners for Human Service
Michael Grice
Derrick Harris –North Lawndale LSC Federation
Sharon Hess – Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless
Ahlam Ibarra - Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Charles Jenkins
Adrian W. Johnson
O'Kema Lewits – Education Agent, Title I Schools
Tyiquite Norwood
Gordon Parks
Devanna Priget
Jeffery Pulliam
Michelle Robbins
Treyonda Towns – Cofi, Cabrini Mothers in Power
Kelly White – Chicago Foundation for Women

The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty Act

(20 ILCS 4080/5)

Sec. 5. Legislative Findings. It is the goal of the State of Illinois that all people be free from poverty.

The preamble to the Constitution of the State of Illinois states that the elimination of poverty and inequality are among the core goals of our State government. The Illinois Human Rights Act states that the public policy of the State of Illinois is "to promote the public health, welfare and safety by protecting the interest of all people in Illinois in maintaining personal dignity, in realizing their full productive capacities, and in furthering their interests, rights and privileges as citizens of this State". The State of Illinois is a party to all international human rights treaties signed and ratified by the United States.

Illinois is one of the wealthiest states in the United States, yet it has one of the highest rates of poverty and extreme poverty in the Midwest. The poverty level in 2007 was $20,620 or less per year for a family of 4 and $10,310 or less per year for a family of 4 in extreme poverty. In 2006 just under 1,400,000 people residing in Illinois were living in poverty and over 687,000 people residing in Illinois were living in extreme poverty. There are people living in extreme poverty in every Illinois county.

Full participation in civic life cannot be achieved without those things that protect and preserve human dignity and make for a healthy life, including adequate nutrition and housing, meaningful work, safe communities, health care, and education.

Illinois has no comprehensive plan for the elimination of poverty.

(Source: P.A. 95-833, eff. 8-15-08.)

(20 ILCS 4080/10)

Sec. 10. Commission on the Elimination of Poverty. The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty is created. The purpose of the Commission is to comprehensively address poverty in Illinois consistent with international human rights standards. The initial goal of the Commission is to develop a poverty elimination strategic plan to reduce extreme poverty in Illinois by 50% or more by 2015. In developing the overall strategic plan, and in working toward the goal of reducing extreme poverty in Illinois by at least 50% by 2015, the Commission shall address, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) Access to safe, decent and affordable housing.
(2) Access to adequate food and nutrition.
(3) Access to affordable and quality health care.
(4) Equal access to quality education and training.
(5) Dependable and affordable transportation.
(6) Access to quality and affordable child care.
(7) Opportunities to engage in meaningful and sustainable work that pays a living wage

(20 ILCS 4080/15)

Sec. 15. Members. The Commission on the Elimination of Poverty shall be composed of no more than 26 voting members including 2 members of the Illinois House of Representatives, one appointed by the Speaker of the House and one appointed by the House Minority Leader; 2 members of the Illinois Senate, one appointed by the Senate President and one appointed by the Senate Minority Leader; one representative of the Office of the Governor appointed by the Governor; one representative of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and 20 public members, 4 of whom shall be appointed by the Governor, 4 of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House, 4 of whom shall be appointed by the House Minority Leader, 4 of whom shall be appointed by the Senate President, and 4 of whom shall be appointed by the Senate Minority Leader. It shall be determined by lot who will appoint which public members of the Commission. The public members shall include a representative of a service-based human rights organization; 2 representatives from anti-poverty organizations, including one that focuses on rural poverty; 2 individuals who have experienced extreme poverty; a representative of an organization that advocates for health care access, affordability and availability; a representative of an organization that advocates for persons with mental illness; a representative of an organization that advocates for children and youth; a representative of an organization that advocates for quality and equality in education; a representative of an organization that advocates for people who are homeless; a representative of a statewide anti-hunger organization; a person with a disability; a representative of an organization that advocates for persons with disabilities; a representative of an organization that advocates for immigrants; a representative of a statewide faith-based organization that provides direct social

services in Illinois; a representative of an organization that advocates for economic security for women; a representative of an organization that advocates for older adults; a representative of a labor organization that represents primarily low and middle-income wage earners; a representative of a municipal or county government; and a representative of township government. The appointed members shall reflect the racial, gender, and geographic diversity of the State and shall include representation from regions of the State experiencing the highest rates of extreme poverty.

The following officials shall serve as ex-officio members: the Secretary of Human Services or his or her designee; the Director of Corrections or his or her designee; the Director of Healthcare and Family Services or his or her designee; the Director of Human Rights or his or her designee; the Director of Children and Family Services or his or her designee; the Director of Commerce and Economic Opportunity or his or her designee; the State Superintendent of Education or his or her designee; the Director of Aging or his or her designee; the Director of Public Health or his or her designee; and the Director of Employment Security or his or her designee. The State Workforce Investment Board, the African-American Family Commission, and the Latino Family Commission shall each designate a liaison to serve ex-officio on the Commission.

Members shall serve without compensation, but, subject to the availability of funds, public members may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary travel expenses connected to Commission business.

Commission members shall be appointed within 60 days after the effective date of this Act. The Commission shall hold its initial meeting within 30 days after at least 50% of the members have been appointed.

The representative of the Office of the Governor and the representative of a service-based human rights organization shall serve as co-chairs of the Commission.

At the first meeting of the Commission, the members shall select a 7-person Steering Committee that includes the co-chairs.

The Commission may establish committees that address specific issues or populations and may appoint individuals with relevant expertise who are not appointed members of the Commission to serve on committees as needed.

Subject to appropriation, the office of the Governor, or a designee of the Governor's choosing, shall provide administrative support to the Commission.

(Source: P.A. 95-833, eff. 8-15-08; 96-64, eff. 7-23-09.)

(20 ILCS 4080/20)

Sec. 20. Meetings; reports. The full Commission shall meet at least annually. The Steering Committee shall meet at least quarterly. In addition, it may hold up to 4 public hearings to assist in the development of the strategic plan. The Commission shall also consider written comments for the purpose of developing the strategic plan.

The Commission shall issue an interim report on its activities and recommendations to the constitutional officers and to the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2009. The strategic plan shall be adopted by the Commission not later than April 1, 2010 and sent to the constitutional officers and to the General Assembly. Following the adoption of the strategic plan, the Commission shall continue to meet and issue annual reports by September 1st of each year after 2010 on the implementation of the strategic plan.

The Commission shall hold at least one public hearing prior to the issuance of each annual report.

(Source: P.A. 95-833, eff. 8-15-08; 96-64, eff. 7-23-09.)

(20 ILCS 4080/99)

Sec. 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.

(Source: P.A. 95-833, eff. 8-15-08.)

References

(Endnotes)

[1] US Census Bureau 2009 American Community Survey

[2] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[3] Preamble – State of Illinois Constitution

[4] *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, G.A. res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 at 71 (1948)

[5] 20 ILCS 4080

[6] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010). The HHS poverty guidelines. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml.

[7] US Census Bureau 2009 American Community Survey

[8] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[9] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[10] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[11] http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/papers/hptgssiv.htm Retrieved 11/30/10.

[12] NAS Poverty Measure. Citro, C. & Michaels, R. eds. Measuring Poverty: A New Approach. National Academy Press, 1995.

[13] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010). The HHS poverty guidelines. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml

[14] U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010). The HHS poverty guidelines. Retrieved from http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml

[15] National Low Income Housing Coalition Out of Reach Report, 2010. Accessed at www.nlihc.org.

[16] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[17] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[18] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[19] Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample.

[20] Finch, I. & Schott, L. (2010) Policy Brief: TANF Benefits Are Low and Have Not Kept Pace With Inflation. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Accessed at www.cbpp.org