



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

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Preserve crucial budget supports for Illinoisans in need

*Advocates: Raising necessary new revenues is far better than
abandoning investments in housing, health care & children's services*

CHICAGO – Tens of thousands of the most vulnerable Illinoisans are in great need of help that hinges upon final state budget decisions.

The tentatively approved Fiscal Year 2009 budget includes important advances in housing supports, health services and programs serving children and youth. But these priorities must be protected in final budget action that still must be taken by Governor Blagojevich and state leaders, insist advocates for Illinoisans in need.

“Real people – including many of the most vulnerable families of Illinois – will be helped, or ignored, by the budget decisions that are under consideration right now,” said Doug Schenkelberg of the **Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights**. “And it’s not only the poorest people who stand to gain or lose.”

“Middle- as well as low-income families struggle to get by, particularly in harsh economic times such as these. A tough economy can quickly change families’ circumstances, leaving people out of work, without adequate housing or reliable health care, and in need of help,” added Eithne McMenamin of the **Chicago Coalition for the Homeless**.

“That’s why it’s critical that our state budget retain substantial, new investments in early childhood and other services for young Illinoisans, as well as families who need help with health care and housing,” agreed Sean Noble of **Voices for Illinois Children**. “In hard times, a wise society strengthens its commitments to people in need, rather than taking a pass on those responsibilities.”

These were among the organizations that joined Wednesday in calling for state officials to finalize a budget that fulfills the promise of Illinois’ tentative spending plan for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

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These statewide, regional and local advocates – representing the needs of vulnerable people, families and communities throughout Illinois – also include:

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois
Illinois Action for Children
Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Protestants for the Common Good
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Supportive Housing Providers Association

Advocates acknowledged observations that the spending plan approved by legislators on May 31 could exceed revenues by as much as \$2 billion.

Such a shortfall greatly complicates the work of both the Governor, who must sign or suggest changes in the budget, and legislators, who then must consider any such suggestions – and whom the Governor has asked for more decision-making help.

But these complications pale in comparison with the day-to-day struggles faced by Illinois families and communities in great need, advocates said. The best course for leaders to take – helping to ease such people’s struggles – is to raise the new revenues that are needed.

There have been a number of revenue-raising options discussed. These and other revenue possibilities should all be on the table for consideration in final budget decisions, advocates emphasized.

Only one option should be ruled-out, they said: Failure – specifically, the failure to work together to proactively meet the needs of Illinois’ most vulnerable people, families and communities.

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