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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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Ford Encourages Early Childhood Education, Passes Bill to Lower School Age

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Continuing with efforts to provide every child in Illinois with an opportunity to receive a quality education, state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) worked with state Senator Kimberly A. Lightford (D-Maywood) to initiate legislation which has now passed both the Senate and the House which will lower the compulsory minimum school age from 7 years to 6 years.

“When I was teaching, I could see the benefits that early education programs provide for our children and our state,” Ford said. “Investing in education for young children helps to give them a head start and also saves tax dollars by reducing future costs for remedial education. In the wake of massive school closings, such as that are occurring in the Chicago Public Schools, we have to come up with new and innovative solutions to maintain an effective education system and provide vital resources for our children.”

Current Illinois law requires children between the ages of seven and 17 years of age attend school. Senate Bill 1307 would require all children between six and 17 years of age attend school, beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. Currently, eight states have a minimum compulsory school age of five, 24 states have a minimum school age of six, while 16 states, including Illinois, have a compulsory minimum school age of seven.

“This bill will help children to develop the social and academic skills that will give them a better chance at success in the future,” Ford said. “It also helps to give children from disadvantaged backgrounds an equal opportunity to excel in the classroom. The early developmental stages are critical in a person’s life, and Illinois cannot afford to put early education on the back burner.”

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at 708-445-3673, 5104 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at 773-378-5902 or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at 217-782-5962.