

# Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

**For Immediate Release:**  
February 23, 2015

**For More Information:**  
State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford  
773 378-5902

## Ford Teams Up With The Chicago Defender To Hold HIV Meeting

**CHICAGO** – State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, has teamed up with Cheryl Mainor, Publisher, and Kai EL’Zabar, Executive Editor, of The Chicago Defender, in efforts to reduce the spread of HIV across Illinois but especially among African Americans by holding an HIV meeting for all interested stakeholders on February 24 at The Chicago Defender offices.

“We must do all we can to screen more people for HIV, find those who are HIV positive, and get them into care,” said Ford. “Early detection saves lives and also prevents infection. We have heard from many people in the community that there still may be barriers to screening for HIV, and we want to work hard to eliminate those barriers. We also need to examine funding for HIV testing and care, which have been threatened. I would like to thank The Chicago Defender, a black-owned newspaper, for joining the efforts to reduce the spread of HIV during Black History Month.”

Facts noted by stakeholders at previous meetings show that black people continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV nationally and in Illinois. In the US, 1 in 16 black men and 1 in 32 black women will be diagnosed with HIV infection. Blacks represent approximately 12% of the U.S. population, but accounted for an estimated 44% of new HIV infections in 2010 (and 41% in 2011). In Illinois, the rate of black men living with HIV is 6.2 times that of white males and the rate of black women living with HIV is 17.8 times that of white females. Some stakeholders believe that these disparities may be explained by HIV testing practices in Illinois. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends routine opt-out HIV screening for everyone ages 13-64. Yet, Illinois ranks 35<sup>th</sup> of 51 states and D.C. for persons ever tested for HIV, with a rate of 36.6% (national goal of 44.2%). For blacks, Illinois ranks 21st out of 51.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> HIV Community Collaboration meeting that Ford has organized in the last year and a half. The goals of the meeting are: to inform policy-making to increase HIV screening by making it easier, routine and more widespread; make it easier to obtain HIV-related grants by community-based organizations; and keep collaboration members informed of issues affecting their work in HIV in the community. A major item on the agenda will be concerning strategies to refund the African American HIV/AIDS Response Act Fund (AAARAF) and discussion about other changes in HIV policy and administration at the state and local levels.

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit [www.lashawnford.com](http://www.lashawnford.com).

<b>Who:</b>	<b>State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, The Chicago Defender, community stakeholders and agencies</b>
<b>What:</b>	<b>HIV Community Collaboration Meeting</b>
<b>When:</b>	<b>Tuesday, February 24, 2015, 10:30 a.m. – 12 noon</b>
<b>Where:</b>	<b>The Chicago Defender offices, 4445 S. Martin Luther King Drive, Chicago, IL 60653</b>