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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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**For More Information:**

State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford

(773) 378-5902

## Rep. Ford's Bills to Update HIV Reporting and HIV Testing Pass Both Houses and Sent to the Governor

**SPRINGFIELD, IL** – In the just-concluded legislative session, State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) introduced two successful pieces of legislation, now on their way to the governor's desk, that improve HIV reporting and testing. Rep. Ford is committed to reducing the number of Illinoisans who are infected with HIV. But, if a person is infected with HIV, Ford wants to make sure that they receive the care they deserve, and updating and improving HIV reporting could do just that. Currently, Illinois only requires the reporting of very low CD-4 counts (<200, the level indicative of AIDS) and does not require the reporting of HIV viral load tests at all. (CD-4 cells are white blood cells of the immune system that are attacked by HIV, and HIV viral load indicates the number of HIV copies in a milliliter of blood.) Introduced by Rep. Ford, House Bill 299 will require hospitals and laboratories to report all CD-4 counts and HIV viral load test results to the Illinois Department of Public Health. "The reporting requirement allows surveillance programs to identify cases of HIV that might not otherwise have been reported and will also help to monitor how well Illinois is doing at getting persons who are infected with HIV into medical care," said Rep. Ford. Exempt from this reporting requirement are hospitals or laboratories that do not have an electronic system for reporting. "This is a chance for the Illinois Department of Public Health to help hospitals or labs that do not have an electronic system for reporting to upgrade their systems," said Rep. Ford.

Rep. Ford also introduced House Bill 204 to update Illinois state law to reflect current standards in HIV testing. In the past, the "gold standard" for confirming HIV infection has been the Western Blot, which is no longer adequate. "We needed to catch up with the times and change state law so it no longer specifies the Western Blot, but instead reflects the most up-to-date recommendations regarding supplemental testing to determine the presence of HIV, and House Bill 204 does that," said Rep. Ford.

Both bills have been passed by both houses of legislature and have been sent to the governor.

For more information, call Rep. Ford's constituent service office at (773) 378-5902.

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