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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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Supreme Court upholds Maryland version of Ford's prison-based gerrymandering bill

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Maryland law ending prison-based gerrymandering. Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) has long advocated for similar legislation in Illinois. The Court's decision in *Fletcher v. Lamone* upheld Maryland's "No Representation Without Population Act," which counts incarcerated people as residents of their legal home addresses for redistricting purposes. Prison-based gerrymandering inflates the political power of people who live near prisons. The practice of prison-based gerrymandering particularly harms urban communities and communities of color that disproportionately contain the home residences of incarcerated persons.

"My bill, and the one passed by Maryland, represent state-based solutions to a long-standing problem in the federal Census. The federal census counts people in prison as residents of the prison location, even though they can't vote and remain residents of their homes for all other legal purposes," said Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago).

The Illinois bill introduced by Rep. Ford, HB 94 made it all the way to a floor vote last year. Rep. Ford expects to re-introduce legislation in the next session of the Illinois General Assembly. New York, Delaware and California have already passed similar laws.

Rep. Ford's bill would adjust redistricting data to count incarcerated people where they live. The bill applies to state, county, and municipal redistricting data, ensuring that prison populations are not used to skew political power in state or local government. Such changes to redistricting data have no affect on the distribution of federal funds.

"Representative Ford has been advocating for an end to prison-based gerrymandering long before the problem was on the national radar. The Supreme Court has given a green light to Rep. Ford's bill to end prison-based gerrymandering in Illinois," said Peter Wagner, Executive Director of the Prison Policy Initiative and the nation's leading expert on how the Census Bureau's practice of counting incarcerated people as residents of the prison locations harms the democratic process.

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