



June 3, 2020

## **A Way Forward**

This has been a time like no other we have experienced. We are living through a global pandemic with stay at home orders only now being relaxed; historic unemployment with many businesses closed; and more people waking up to the reality of years of constant violence inflicted on African Americans by law enforcement because of the murder of our brother George Floyd. As James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” I can only imagine the days surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights movement. But this is our moment. What is the way forward?

At a press conference with the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus on June 2, 2020, I called for Governor Pritzker to sign an Executive Order that will free up spending to help rebuild African-American communities around the state in the wake of both the COVID-19 pandemic and looting that occurred in our communities.

We know the Black community has been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Black community has been hit the hardest by the opioid overdose epidemic. The Black community has been hit the hardest by violence. The Black community has been hit the hardest by police brutality. The Black community has been hit the hardest by recent looting and riots.

The unrest and damage we have witnessed is like a natural disaster. We need Governor Pritzker to use as much of his executive power as he can to redirect state and federal funds to African-American communities hardest hit by looting and the COVID-19 pandemic.

With billions in federal funding from the federal stimulus bill at his disposal and a recent budget passed by the state Legislature that gives Pritzker some discretion in spending, an Executive Order will go a long way in rebuilding the state and give the governor the ability to “operate outside of the Legislature,” that could free up spending from “lockboxes” to deal with the crisis.

The federal money is separated into funds for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and for COVID-19 related response that should be spent in African-American communities around the state. Federal grants as well as money allocated in the operating and capital budgets could be used to rebuild the state.

Governor Pritzker should prioritize where he is going to spend money just like every family does. Families that struggle can’t pay all the bills, but they pay the bills that matter most. We need to spend and invest in areas that need the help the most, and those areas are African American communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LSK', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District