

News...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:

For More Information:
773-378-5902
RepFord@LaShawnFord.com

Ford Highlights Need to Prioritize Homeless Providers during COVID-19 Crisis

CHICAGO – State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, is encouraging state leaders to remember and prioritize homeless care efforts during the COVID-19 outbreak and to take necessary steps to protect homeless providers who are putting their personal health at risk to help those in need.

“Homeless providers are in the line of fire helping the most vulnerable, and like our healthcare workers they need resources to protect themselves,” Ford said “Right now they are not being treated on the same level as healthcare workers, nursing homes and other respondents, and they should. The homeless is made up of a population, if infected, can become difficult to track, test and take care of for homeless providers. This can also backtrack progress of reducing the spread of COVID 19 if they are infected and are forced to roam around for shelter and not treated.”

Currently homeless providers are mostly dependent on the generosity of donors for personal protection equipment and other resources. Ford would like to see them included in the state’s overall response effort to the pandemic, and wants to see disaster money dedicated to homeless care assistance. While providers have and continue to take strict and rigorous steps to limit the risk of infection, there is concern that the work is becoming more hazardous and will be more difficult without adequate resources.

“Our homeless population is already incredibly vulnerable and susceptible to serious health issues,” Ford said. “The coronavirus will hurt a lot of people in this population unless we take all the steps that we can to make sure that homeless providers have the resources and protection they need to provide the best care possible. We can’t wait to take action; we have to do it now.”

Neli Vazquez Rowland, President & Co-Founder of A Safe Haven Foundation is helping to increase awareness of prioritizing homelessness during this time.

“I’d like to thank State Representative La Shawn Ford and everyone in the community who has already reached out to advocate and support the homeless,” said Vazquez Rowland. “I thank them for helping put the spotlight on the urgent needs we are facing on the front lines among the State’s network of homeless and community-based state licensed behavioral healthcare workforce. It is imperative that we are included as a priority and critical part of the COVID-19 response team on par with healthcare and

nursing homeworkers, especially when it comes to the allocation of medical supplies and financial resources.”

Both parties agree that if we do not take care of the homeless and make sure that they too are sheltered in place as well, all our efforts will be undermined. Vazquez Rowland believes the homeless are the most predisposed to the disease and they need priority from all government support in order to accomplish their goal of housing the homeless too. Without the appropriate medical supplies and financial resources, many homeless program’s staff and residents are already experiencing outbreaks and closing their doors.

“Thankfully, at A Safe Haven since we do not offer congregate style living, but semiprivate accommodations, and very strict infection control policies, and so far, we have not had any positive COVID-19 cases reported among our residents nor staff,” said Vazquez Rowland. “However, without the appropriate support, it is only a matter of time before we will eventually succumb to the virus too. In order to continue and even expand our capacity to do more, we must make sure that we are protecting our staff and our residents from the COVID-19 virus. I urge everyone to please support elevating homeless and state licensed residential community based behavioral healthcare programs to first responder status. It will be more inclusive and help us truly flatten the curve.”

Residents who are interested in supporting local homeless efforts can visit asafehaven.org, which is accepting donations for their fight to keep residents healthy. Anyone with concerns about COVID-19 may call the Illinois Department of Public Health’s hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email DPH.SICK@ILLINOIS.GOV.

###