



February 19, 2020

Illinois' State Budget

Today, Governor Pritzker announces his Fiscal Year 2021 Budget proposal. In Illinois, as in other states, lawmakers and public officials are elected in part to manage the state's finances. This includes generating revenues (money coming into the state from various sources) and approving expenditures (the money spent on governmental functions and servicing state debt). State budgets are complex and can change over time, as they depend on anticipated revenues and planned expenditures, which may alter over the course of a fiscal year. If revenues do not keep pace with expenditures, states generally have to raise taxes, cut services, borrow money, or a combination of the three. State budget decisions are also influenced by policy decisions at the national level, such as the Affordable Care Act or energy and environmental regulations; and issues at the local level, such as crime and the quality of education.

Since being in Springfield, I have taken on issues of social justice and changing our criminal justice system in Illinois. I have fought to Ban the Box on employment applications, seal non-violent criminal records, expand screening for HIV, address the heroin crisis, promote restorative justice practices, provide additional funding for our schools, restore funding for childcare, and hold financial institutions more accountable.

As the current Chair of the House Higher Education-Appropriations Committee and as a member of the budget team, we have been meeting to craft the budget for FY 2021. We must increase support for higher education. Our public universities enrollment numbers are down. We must increase enrollment to our universities in Illinois and retain and recruit students to Illinois. Reducing the brain drain and having a skilled workforce will increase businesses and jobs which will increase tax revenues without increasing taxes on taxpayers.

The budget proposal includes several items that support higher education in Illinois. Our goals are to increase college affordability and expand economic opportunity. Governor Pritzker's budget proposal: increases the Monetary Award Program (MAP) by \$50 million; dedicates 15% of MAP awards to community college students (which means that tuition-free community college will be available to MAP-eligible students in families with incomes under \$45,000/year); includes \$35 million for the 3rd year of AIM HIGH Pilot Program; increases public university operations funding by \$55.6 million; increases community college operations funding by \$14.9 million; creates a new \$5 million community college apprenticeship grant program; and continues \$500 million in investments in innovative research facilities through Discovery Partners Institute and Illinois Innovation Network.

My goal is to work for a strong fiscal 2021 budget that will put us on a path that restores Illinois as a place of fiscal and economic health. Budgets are actually declarations of policy. We must restore economic and budgetary stability - that's why I am working hard as Chair of the Illinois House Higher Education Appropriations Committee, the budget team, and a member of House Personnel and Pensions Committee. It

is my goal to work with both Republicans and Democrats to stabilize the pension fund, eliminate the structural deficits in Illinois, and create better policies for all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford

State Representative-Eighth District