



April 29, 2020

FORD & TWISTA TO VISIT STATEVILLE TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES AND INMATES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

I will head to Stateville on Saturday, May 2, 2020, along with Twista and other stakeholders to advocate for staff support, delivery of crucial COVID-19 supplies, the speedy release of qualified COVID-19 high-risk inmates, and improved treatment of current inmates.

Governor Pritzker recently requires mask coverings in Illinois, especially in areas that make social distancing difficult. I want to make sure both employees and inmates are given masks and other supplies to protect them from COVID-19.

Social distancing is impossible in prisons. We in Illinois are going to lead by example and provide these crucial supplies such as masks and clean water to employees and inmates at Stateville immediately. We need to make sure the living conditions are safe and healthy for inmates in the prison facility - this will also make it safe for Stateville employees.

Since it was announced that the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) will evaluate those inmates at high risk to COVID-19, I will continue to advocate for inmates that are qualified for early release. I have received many letters and emails from constituents with loved ones in prison with non-violent crimes who are at high risk. If they qualify under the guidelines for early release, we need to have them released or else their stay could turn into a death sentence. If you have a loved one in this situation, please email me at repford@lashawnford.com.

While at Stateville, I also plan to advocate for better treatment and conditions within IDOC. I believe prisoners are not receiving the educational opportunities they need to be equipped for a successful return home. According to Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 1,200 individuals are released annually directly from prison to homeless shelters in Chicago - as many as 48 percent of individuals in Chicago emergency shelters report having a felony conviction.

Illinois must put trade and vocational training or career technical education programs in prisons. The programs must be designed to teach inmates general employment skills or skills needed for specific jobs and industries. We still hear of misuse of solitary confinement. There are major deficiencies in prisoner medical and mental health care. Many improvements are needed in IDOC.

We must all mask up, practice social distancing and be safe, and this includes our brothers and sisters in IDOC.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District