

Media Advisory...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:

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Ford Aims to Increase Pharmacy Access, Will Host Press Conference Thursday

CHICAGO – State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, is introducing legislation to ensure greater access to pharmacy services for Illinois Medicaid recipients, and will hold a press conference to discuss the effort on Thursday, Feb. 4 at 8 a.m. via Zoom.

As of Dec. 1, 2020, Aetna Better Health of Illinois (ABHIL) Medicaid recipients must use CVS pharmacies or a limited number of smaller independent pharmacies. Using Walgreens pharmacies is generally no longer an option for these recipients. Much of the West and South Sides of Chicago are pharmacy deserts, with no CVS pharmacies in the majority Black West Side communities of Humboldt Park, East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, North Lawndale or Austin.

On Dec. 28, 2020, Ford called on Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to ensure greater access to pharmacy services for Illinois Medicaid recipients who have ABHIL as their managed care organization. On Dec. 30, 2020, Ford received a letter from HFS stating that they have found that “all of Cook County... met 100% of the [pharmacy] access requirements for Illinois Medicaid customers.” Further detailed investigation by pharmacy desert expert Dr. Dima Qato, health equity expert Dr. David Ansell, and student Starmesha Prater, has revealed that there are indeed major pharmacy access issues on the West Side.

“Limiting pharmacy options for Medicaid recipients affects people not only on the West and South Sides of Chicago, but people throughout Illinois,” said Ford. “During this COVID-19 pandemic when people need their medications and the coronavirus vaccine at pharmacies, and when people are dying daily due to opioid overdoses, it makes no sense to limit access to pharmacies.

“I’ve talked to representatives from CVS, Aetna, and HFS to correct this injustice and this direct attack on the poor. I’ve worked with providers and advocates on a legislative fix to end this bad business practice, leading to the legislation that I am introducing,” said Ford. “Our press conference will discuss the findings of our pharmacy desert experts and the legislation.”

Who: State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, Dr. Dima Qato, Dr. David Ansell, Starmesha Prater, stakeholders

When: Feb. 4, 2021 8 a.m. Central Time

Where: Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86936010218>; Meeting ID: 869 3601 0218;

One tap mobile: +13126266799,,86936010218# US (Chicago)

For more information, please contact Ford at his office or email RepFord@LaShawnFord.com.

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