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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:
April 18, 2013

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Ford Works with Quinn to Remove Criminal Background Question on State Applications

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – After years of advocating for re-entry resources on behalf of ex-offenders, state Rep. La Shawn Ford, D-Chicago, applauded Gov. Pat Quinn’s plan to remove criminal background pre-screening questions on state employment applications. In a letter sent to Ford, Wednesday, Gary Hannig, Quinn’s director of legislative affairs, indicated that Quinn would issue an administrative order removing the question.

“People who have made mistakes in the past still deserve an opportunity to have gainful employment and to lead successful lives,” Ford said. “I also firmly believe that this measure is a real way to prevent crime in the long run. I’ve been a longtime sponsor of legislation to prevent state government from asking about criminal history when it isn’t pertinent to the job, and I am proud to stand with Gov. Quinn to restore justice and bring hope to people from all walks of life. As chairman of the House Restorative Justice Committee, I thank Gov. Quinn for his courage and willingness to be a voice for one of our most vulnerable communities and helping ex-offenders.”

Ford has worked since 2007 to pass legislation removing questions about criminal background from state applications. Currently, the application issued by the Illinois Department of Central Management Services requires that the applicant check a box indicating whether or not they have pled guilty to or been convicted of any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation. In his letter to Ford, Hannig indicated that removing the question would allow hiring managers to learn of a candidate’s skills and qualifications before making decisions based on their history, and commends Ford and his colleagues in the General Assembly that have spearheaded the efforts in bringing this issue to bear. Agencies will still be allowed to request information about prior criminal convictions and run background checks at a later stage in the hiring process.

“Under the current system, qualified jobseekers may have their applications tossed in the trash once they indicate that they have been convicted of non-violent crimes,” Ford said. “People should not have to pay for a lifetime after they have served their sentences. Skilled job-hunters should at least get an opportunity to show employers what they have to offer.”

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at 708-445-3673, 5104 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at 773-378-5902 or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at 217-782-5962.

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