

# Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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**For More Information:**  
State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford  
773 379-4663

## Ford's Bill Protecting Privacy of HIV-Positive Students Signed Into Law

**CHICAGO** – Legislation introduced by State Representative La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) which protects the privacy of students who have HIV was signed into law today by Governor Pat Quinn. Previously, if a student was infected with HIV, the Illinois Department of Public Health or a local health department was required to report the student's HIV status to the school's principal, who in turn could notify others at the school. The new law repeals this requirement.

"I want to salute the many groups who work on issues concerning HIV, school health and public health who came together to advocate and help make this change in state law a reality," said Ford. "I first introduced this legislation in 2008, and we continued to introduce it in subsequent years, and we have worked together to show that repeal of this requirement is not only important for the privacy and confidentiality for students, but is also important for public health," said Ford. Ford introduced HB61 into the current General Assembly where it was passed by the House and Senate, and with the Governor's signature, it becomes Public Act 98-0353.

Health guidelines indicate that universal precautions should be used for any student, regardless of whether the person is HIV positive or not. Experts in HIV testing indicate that repeal of this requirement protects the privacy of students and may encourage more students to get tested for HIV because they will know that their privacy will be respected if they are HIV positive.

"This is a tremendous victory for Illinois youth and their medical privacy," said Ramon Gardenhire, of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. "With the Governor's action today we end 25 years of discriminatory practice toward HIV-positive students and their families."

For more information, contact one of Ford's constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit [www.lashawnford.com](http://www.lashawnford.com).