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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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Ford Meets with Green Technology Businesses on Legislative Solutions to Bring Down Barriers

SPRINGFIELD, IL – To advocate for advancements in Illinois that will create jobs and increase our ability to compete in a global marketplace, state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, chaired a hearing of the House Small Business Empowerment & Workforce Development Committee on Wednesday to discuss what legislative action can be taken to help support businesses with green technology initiatives.

"I am glad to work with Illinois businesses and leaders on Green Technology issues to support innovative solutions to improve sustainability, provide needed assistance to small businesses in this industry and create jobs," Ford said. "It's important that we maintain strong renewable energy standards, provide incentives for clean energy and ensure that state policies provide an environment that supports economic development. I will continue working to push this conversation forward to ensure that our state is at the forefront of this issue."

Ford held the green technology hearing to find solutions to the barriers that prevent growth and development for Green Technology businesses in Illinois. The committee heard from a wide range of business owners and specialists on wind and solar power, geothermal energy, education opportunities, workforce development and smart grid technology. Ford intends to continue working with these groups to make sure that state laws are up-to-date with new cutting edge technologies in sustainability.

A recent study by the Clean Energy Trust, Environmental Law & Policy Center and the Natural Resources Defense Council found that Illinois has more than 96,000 clean energy jobs today and that energy jobs are growing at about 9 percent a year and 77 percent of clean energy businesses employ less than 25 workers.

Ty Benefiel, a prize winner at the 2014 Clean Energy Challenge and the co-founder of MeterGenius, a website to help inform customers with smart meters about the electric bills and how to lower them, testified at Wednesday's hearing. He suggested that legislators take action by supporting funding for programs and tax incentives for entrepreneurs looking to start green technology businesses and updating energy efficiency standards.

"State and local regulations can be the catalyst for new markets, businesses and job opportunities in the clean energy sector, Benefiel said. "Illinois has one of the most aggressive energy efficiency mandates in the country. Not only has this reduced electricity consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, but over 60,000 Illinois residents are now employed by energy efficiency companies. However, a lot has changed since the Renewable Portfolio Standard was passed, and it's time to update policies in order to generate more growth in these industries."

For more information, please contact one of Ford's constituent service offices: 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at 773-378-5902 or 239-E Stratton Office Building in Springfield at 217-782-5962.

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