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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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Ford Introduces Bill to Curb Abusive Local Government Collection Tactics

CHICAGO – In response to recent activity by local governments trying to collect decades-old parking tickets and other fine through collections agencies, state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, has introduced a measure to limit collection referrals to within seven years of an alleged violation.

“Residents are starting to receive calls and notices from collections agencies over parking tickets that were supposedly not paid decades ago,” Ford said. “In some cases, it appears that local governments are using old data that may not even be accurate. I don’t want to see residents double charged or forced to dig up paperwork from the 1980s to avoid unfair charges.”

Prompted by a recent story by the Chicago Tribune, Ford’s House Bill 3866 is in response to recent reports of counties and other municipalities that are using collections agencies to contact individuals over debts for fines. In some cases, supporting paperwork has not been provided to indicate a fine was never paid, and some individuals have complained that they are being asked to pay again for a ticket they already dealt with. Concern has been expressed that poorer individuals may be less able to defend themselves and may no longer have documentation to use as evidence.

“I fully understand that residents need to pay their fines or pursue a challenge if they disagree, but it seems to me that reviewing incredibly old records is not fair for a person who all of a sudden is being asked to pay for something they have no recollection of,” Ford said. “Instead of taking an educated guess that the right people are being contacted, let’s instead manage fines in a more reasonable period of time moving forward.”

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