



January 29, 2020

Gov. Pritzker's Response to the Opioid Crisis

As written on the Illinois.gov website: "Building on the state's commitment to address the opioid crisis, [on January 27, 2020] Governor Pritzker signed Executive Order 2020-02 to better address racial disparities in responding to the opioid crisis by establishing the Governor's Opioid Overdose Prevention and Recovery Steering Committee. Illinois is also dedicating \$4.1 million state dollars to expand recovery and prevention services for individuals with opioid use disorder in all corners of the state."

I joined Governor Pritzker at the press conference to support his swift action to avoid the legislative process. The legislative process could take months and could be faced with opposition. People are dying of opioid overdoses every day in Illinois, with the West Side especially hard hit, so we need quick action and more resources now. The Executive Order was the action to take, and it proves the Governor is aware and listens to providers, community organizations and the needs of those struggling with opioid use disorder. Members from the West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force were also at the press conference to support the signing of the Executive Order and to prepare to work with the governor's office, Human Services, Public Health, and other agencies to help execute the new order.

"This executive order begins an effort to achieve social equity as we work to end the opioid crisis in Illinois," said Governor JB Pritzker. "We will coordinate innovative, evidence-based approaches in partnership with harm-reduction organizations, establish local systems of care in disproportionately impacted communities, and create a comprehensive statewide opioid plan. I'm equally proud to announce that my administration is increasing our state investment in this fight by over \$4 million in this fiscal year. Illinois has made great strides in responding to the opioid crisis that has swept the nation, but our work won't be done until all our residents have the opportunity to live their most fulfilling lives."

More details about the Executive Order: "Saving lives through safer use is an important component of the state's overall strategy, but the ultimate goal is to connect people with the treatment they need to fully recover. The administration will invest \$550,000 to encourage doctors to prescribe medication assisted treatment (MAT) for individuals with opioid use disorder. Another \$2.75 million will be invested in overdose prevention. This includes investments in the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to ensure that first responders and treatment providers can respond in real time when there is a spike in overdoses in a community. This response will include overdose prevention training, local public awareness messages, and the purchase of 50,000 doses of naloxone to put directly in the hands of community residents."

At the press conference, I spoke about the need for housing for those in recovery; naloxone (Narcan) in every household; the need for more mental health care; and additional funding for increasing awareness of what do to in case there is an overdose and increasing awareness of treatment that actually works.

I am looking forward to continue our work with the West Side Heroin/Opioid Task Force to make sure that resources promised in the governor's Executive Order come to the West Side and other hard-hit areas of Illinois so lives can be saved and people can live their best lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford

State Representative-Eighth District