



March 31, 2021

## Working for Justice in the Courts

I would like to highlight some legislation that I have introduced that will bring more justice to our courts and systems of justice. These pieces of legislation have recently passed out of committees and are now on the floor of the House for consideration.

I introduced [House Bill 350](#) to make Criminal and Traffic Courts fairer. House Bill 350 provides that before the court orders an assessment, the court shall make a determination of the defendant's ability to pay the assessment. It also provides that if the court determines that the defendant is unable to pay the assessment, the court may reduce the assessment or waive the assessment in the court's discretion. Very importantly, it deletes language providing that one hour of public or community service shall be equivalent to \$4 of assessment, and instead provides instead that one hour of public or community service shall be equivalent to the value of one hour of work at the state minimum wage or the minimum hourly wage in the municipality where the defendant resides, whichever is greater.

I introduced [House Bill 434](#) to immediately expunge or completely remove a charge from someone's record if they are found not guilty or if the charges are dismissed. House Bill 434 provides that records of charges that result in an acquittal or dismissal with prejudice, except for minor traffic offenses, may be immediately expunged after the final disposition of the case. It also provides that upon entry of judgment, the defendant shall be informed of this right and the proper procedures to follow to have records that are eligible be immediately expunged, and also provides that the petition may be filed on behalf of the defendant by his or her attorney at the final disposition hearing, or by the defendant at any time. Lastly, it provides that no fees shall be charged by the circuit court clerk or the Illinois State Police for processing petitions filed under this provision.

I introduced [House Bill 862](#) to limit the time that a debt may be collected after a city ordinance violation. House Bill 862 provides that an action to collect a debt arising from a violation of a municipal ordinance may not be filed more than 7 years after the date of adjudication.

These pieces of legislation just make sense, and we need to work to get these passed, on to the Senate, and then signed into law by Governor Pritzker. Let's keep up the fight for fairness and justice!

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District