

January 23, 2022

Hon. JB Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
Office of the Governor
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Governor Pritzker:

The undersigned 255 organizations (*our list of signers has been updated since our December 21 version of this letter*), including religious congregations and elected officials, urge you to include a \$51 million increase in General Revenue Funds (GRF) for the Illinois Department of Human Services' Emergency and Transitional Housing (ETH) Program in your fiscal year 2024 budget proposal, increasing funding from \$10.38 million to \$61.38 million.

Many of the signers are members of the recently formed Illinois Shelter Alliance (ISA), a coalition of more than 50 emergency shelter and transitional housing agencies and their allies who are advocating for a more dignified, supportive and effective crisis housing system in Illinois.

The ETH Program has long been underfunded, leaving agencies not able to adequately serve people with no place to call home. Taking inflation into account, state funding for the ETH Program is only half what it was 20 years ago.

A shortage of resources forces shelters to turn people away and have waiting lists. One ISA member with a capacity to provide 120 shelter beds at any one time has a waiting list with more than 100 people on it. Another has been forced to implement a nightly lottery to determine who can sleep at the shelter. These aren't new or uncommon challenges, but ISA members overwhelmingly report that the shortage of emergency shelter beds is getting worse.

The lack of emergency shelter often forces people to live outside, in a car and/or a place where their physical safety and life is at risk. For the most vulnerable, including people who are victims of domestic violence and people with mental illness, having access to emergency shelter makes the difference between life and death, particularly when the weather turns cold.

The Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness recently estimated the unmet need is for 4,551 additional emergency shelter beds statewide. Every shelter bed that does not exist represents a person, often a child, in Illinois who has literally no place to stay on any given night. About 6,769 shelter beds are currently available. ISA's estimate is that the average annual operating and service costs for a shelter bed are \$15,000 per bed. Therefore, based on the overall need of about 11,320 beds, the State of Illinois is contributing only about 6% of the funding needed to make sure all those in need have access to shelter.

Without a significant increase in state funding, the severe shelter shortage will worsen.

ISA members estimate that at least 1,600 existing shelter beds could be lost during 2023 due to federal COVID-19 relief funds, mostly being spent on hotel vouchers, being fully expended.

ISA members report that 76% of churches that previously offered donated basement and gym spaces are no longer willing to host shelter due to closures, declining membership and COVID-19 concerns.

The severe shortage of emergency beds for people in crisis is also being exacerbated by current economic conditions. Agencies are struggling to pay competitive wages to retain and recruit qualified staff in the current labor market, as well as dealing with higher operating costs due to inflation.

Despite these enormous challenges, there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a more humane and effective crisis housing system using federal resources available from the American Rescue Plan Act and CARES Act to help acquire and develop non-congregate shelters in former hotels and other sites. However, increased ETH funding from the state is crucial to provide the operating and service funding necessary to make use of the federal funds.

ISA estimates that the requested increased ETH funding in the FY24 state budget would save 1,600 at-risk beds and, over time, create up to 3,000 new shelter beds in a variety of settings, such as non-congregate shelters, congregate shelters and hotels.

Overall, funding is needed to assist providers with employee recruitment and retention efforts; to provide services to divert people from shelter when better options are available; to maintain shelter and hotel voucher capacity currently being funded with federal pandemic relief resources that will soon be fully expended; to increase the overall number of emergency shelter beds available in congregate and non-congregate settings; and to increase the number of scattered-site hotel vouchers available in communities that would otherwise have to deny people shelter.

We know that you have a commitment to the needs raised in this letter, as evidenced by your administration helping people to move to hotels from congregate shelters to stay safe at the beginning of the pandemic; your executive order resulting in *Home Illinois*, the recently released first state plan to prevent and end homelessness; and working with the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide an additional \$5 million to support the expansion of access to emergency shelters this winter—to name just three of your many actions to provide the resources necessary to move Illinois towards being able to make sure everyone has a home.

These increased resources would better serve the needs of people who experience homelessness. As data compiled in the *Home Illinois* report demonstrates, in our state people who are Black are 7 times more likely than people who are white to experience homelessness. Based on point in time count data, children represented 21% of the homeless population in 2020. Others experiencing homelessness are extremely vulnerable as a result of severe mental illness, fleeing domestic violence and/or other chronic health conditions.

If you have comments or questions regarding this letter, please contact Doug Kenshol, Co-Founder of the Illinois Shelter Alliance and Executive Director of South Suburban PADS, 708-332-7705 and dkenshol@sspads.org; or Bob Palmer, Policy Director, Housing Action Illinois, 312-939-6075 and bob@housingactionil.org.

Sincerely,

Signers updated since December 21 version of letter.

360 Youth Services, Naperville
A Safe Place, Zion
Above & Beyond Family Recovery Center,
Housing Dept, Chicago
Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago
Adams County
African American Christian Foundation, Oak
Park
Agape, NFP, Joliet
AgeOptions, Oak Park
AIDS Foundation Chicago
All Chicago Making Homelessness History
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban
Cook County
ALLMED Staffing, Homewood
Anew: Building Beyond Violence and
Abuse, Homewood
Arab American Family Services, Worth
Ascension Mercy Medical Center, Aurora
Association for Individual Development,
Aurora
Aurora Rapid Response Team
BCMw Community Services, Centralia
BEDS Plus Care Inc., La Grange
Berkeley Public Library
Bethel Baptist Church, Chicago Heights
Bethel Family Resource Center, Chicago
Heights
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Saint Charles
Beyond Hunger, Oak Park
Binational Institute of Human Development,
Chicago
Black Alliance for Peace, Aurora
Boys & Girls Club of Lake County,
Waukegan

Bridge Communities, Inc., Glen Ellyn
Bridges to Bond, Maywood
C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation,
Effingham
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of
Chicago
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet
Catholic Conference of Illinois
CBR Tranquility Development NFP, Chicago
CDBG Operations Corporation, East St.
Louis
CEDA, Cook County
Center for Disability & Elder Law, Chicago
Center for Housing and Health, Chicago
Center of Concern, Des Plaines
Champaign County Health Care Consumers
Champaign County Mental Health Board
Champaign County Regional Planning
Commission
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Champaign-Urbana Tenant Union
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Chicago Heights Public Library
Chicago Housing Trust
Chicago NWS Homeless Outreach
Christian Care, Rock Island
Christian County Development Corp,
Petersburg
City of Champaign Township Supervisor
Andy Quarnstrom
Coalition to End Homelessness in Evanston
Community Action Network (CAN), Chicago
Community Action Partnership of Central IL,
Lincoln

Community Action Partnership of Lake
County
Community Allies, Saint Louis MO
Community Church, Fox River Grove
Connections for the Homeless, Evanston
Contact Ministries, Springfield
Cook County Commissioner Kevin
Morrison, District 15
Cook County Department of Public Health
Cook County Health
COOL Ministries, Waukegan
Cornerstone Community Development
Corporation, Ford Heights
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
Courage Connection, Urbana
Cunningham Township, Urbana
Dale Taylor Re/Max 10, New Lenox
Decatur Housing Authority
DeLaCerde House, Inc., Rock Island
Des Plaines Public Library
Designed with Care, Chicago
Disability Resource Center, Joliet
DOLL, INC., South Holland
Dove, Inc., Decatur
Dream Bearzz, Dolton
Dream Center Peoria
DuPage Federation on Human Services
Reform
Dupage Habitat For Humanity
DuPagePads
Elgin Partnership for Early Learning
Embarras River Basin Agency, Inc.,
Greenup
Empowerment Opportunity Center, Decatur
Faith Lutheran Church, Homewood
Featherfist, Calumet City
Fifth Street Renaissance, Springfield
First United Methodist Church of Lombard
First United Methodist Church of West
Chicago
Flossmoor Public Library
Forest Park Public Library
Fox River Valley Initiative
Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice
Fox Valley United Way, Aurora

Franciscan Outreach, Chicago
Freeport Area Church Cooperative
Friendship UMC, Bolingbrook
Gender and Sexuality Resource Center at
the University of Illinois
Champaign-Urbana
Genesis Garden, Macomb
Greater Peoria Empowerment
Grundy Area PADS
Habitat for Humanity of Champaign County
HEAR US Inc., Naperville
Heartland Alliance
Heartland Continuum of Care, Springfield
Helping Hands of Springfield
Hesed House, Aurora
HigherLearningNetwork.org, Chicago
Holy Cross Parish Hesed House Ministry,
Batavia
Holy Family Ministries, Chicago
Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Naperville
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Chicago
Home of the Sparrow, McHenry
HOPE Fair Housing Center, Wheaton
Hope Haven of Dekalb County, Inc.
Housing Action Illinois
Housing Authority of Cook County
Housing Choice Partners, Chicago
Housing Forward, Maywood
Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for
the Elderly (H.O.M.E.), Chicago
ICNA Relief, Chicago
IFF
Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of
Pediatrics
Illinois Housing Council
Illinois Hunger Coalition
Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO), Chicago
Illinois Shelter Alliance
Impact Behavioral Health Partners,
Evanston
IMPACT CIL, Alton
Indivisible Aurora
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Chicago
Journeys | The Road Home, Palatine

Jubilee Faith Community Church ELCA,
Country Club Hills
Kane County United
Kendall County Health Department
La Casa Norte, Chicago
Lake County Coalition for the Homeless
Lake County Housing Authority
Lansing Public Library
Law Center for Better Housing, Chicago
Lazarus House, Saint Charles
League of Women Voters of Illinois
Life Church, Chicago Heights
Linc, Inc. Center for Independent Living,
Swansea
Lincoln Elks Lodge #914
Little Fannie's Heavenly Housing, Dolton
Logan County Department of Public Health,
Lincoln
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Oak
Forest
Mano a Mano Family Resource Center,
Round Lake Park
Matthew House Chicago, Chicago
Mattoon Area PADS
MedEx International, River Forest
MERCY Communities, Inc., Springfield
Mercy Housing Lakefront, Chicago
Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago
Mid Central Community Action, Bloomington
Milie's Manor Inc, Highland IN
Molina Healthcare of Illinois
MorningStar Mission, Joliet
Mutual Ground, Inc., Aurora
New Faith Baptist Church International,
Matteson
Niles Township Government, Skokie
North Cook Regional Office of Education
North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic, Highland
Park
Northeast Community Fund, Decatur
Northern Illinois Homeless Coalition,
Rockford
Northwest Compass, Inc, Mount Prospect
Oak Leaf Realty, Frankfort
Oak Park Homelessness Coalition

Oak Park-River Forest Community
Foundation
Open Communities, Evanston
Open Door Advisors, Inc., Chicago
Out Helping Others, Homewood
Outreach Community Ministries, Carol
Stream
PADS For St. Rita of Cascia, Saint Charles
PADS Lake County
PADS of Elgin
Phoenix Community Development Services,
Peoria
Pioneer Center for Human Services,
McHenry
Preservation of Affordable Housing Inc.
(POAH), Chicago
Primo Center for Women and Children,
Chicago
Prince of Peace UMC Mission and
Outreach, Elk Grove Village
Prison Yoga Chicago
Progress Center for Independent Living,
Forest Park
Quincy Human Rights Commission
Record-A-Hit, Inc., Vernon Hills
Renaissance Social Services, Chicago
Respond Now, Chicago Heights
Rotary Club of Aurora, IL, USA
Safe and Livable Housing Committee,
Quincy
Senior Services Associates, Kane, Kendall
and McHenry Counties
Sertoma Centre, Inc., Alsip
Shawnee Development Council, Inc.,
Karnak
Shelter Care Ministries, Rockford
Shriver Center on Poverty Law, Chicago
Sinai Urban Health Institute, Chicago
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Hampshire
Solutions for Care, Riverside
South Suburban Council on Homelessness
South Suburban Housing Center,
Homewood
South Suburban PADS
Southern Illinois CIL, Carbondale

Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless
Southwestern Christian Center, Fairview
Heights
Springfield Center for Independent Living
St. Andrew United Methodist Women,
Glenwood
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Glenwood
St. John's Episcopal Church, Chicago
St. Katherine Drexel, Sugar Grove
St. Luke Peace and Justice, River Forest
St. Mary Catholic Church, Aurora
St. Peter Catholic Church, Geneva
St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Midlothian
State Representative Barbara Hernandez
State Representative Lindsey LaPointe
State Representative Michelle Mussman
State Senator Melinda Bush
Supportive Housing Providers Association
Thamizh Schools USA, Hickory Hills
The Boulevard of Chicago
The Center of Concern, Des Plaines
The Good Samaritan Inn, Decatur
The Harbour, Park Ridge
The Heart of Illinois United Way, Peoria
The Inner Voice Inc., Chicago
The Lusory, Chicago
The Salvation Army of McLean County,
Bloomington
The Salvation Army, Chicago
The Salvation Army, Quincy
The Samaritan Well, Inc., Macomb

The Statewide Independent Living Council
of Illinois
The United Methodist Church of Geneva
Thresholds, Chicago
Trilogy, Chicago
Trinity Services, Inc., Joliet
Unitarian Universalist Community Church,
Park Forest
United Methodist Church of Antioch
United Methodist Church of Geneva
University of Illinois Chicago, Center for
Research on Women and Gender
Victory Apostolic Church, Matteson
Village of Park Forest
Warp Corps, Woodstock
Waukegan Township Eddie Washington
Center/Staben House
Wellington United Church of Christ, Chicago
Wesley United Methodist Church, Aurora
West Central IL Continuum of Care
West Suburban IL Democratic Socialists of
America
Western Illinois Regional Council
Will-Grundy Medical Clinic, Joliet
Woodford Homes-Macon County Mental
Health Board, Decatur
Workforce and Human Development
Services DBA The Journey Forward,
Chicago
Working Family Solidarity, Chicago
Youth Advocacy Foundation, Chicago
ZION Development Corp., Rockford

Cc: Sol Flores, Deputy Governor
Lizzy Whitehorn, First Assistant Deputy Governor
Grace Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services
Christine Haley, Chief, Illinois Office to Prevent & End Homelessness, Illinois Department of
Human Services
Tim Verry, Director of the Division of Family and Community Services, Illinois Department of
Human Services