Illinois Access to Justice Program Act
HB 131

“Illinois Access to Justice and Opportunity Program” seeks to create a public/private fund for Community-Based Legal Assistance and Community Navigators program for low-income and vulnerable populations to access prosperity and family sustaining jobs.

The twin scourges of mass incarceration and mass deportation, combined with the systemic criminalization of people of color, have left communities of color in this nation reeling. Yet, these communities have amazing resilience and talent. Illinois Access to Justice and Opportunity is a program that seeks to strengthen the existing infrastructure of our effective community organizations, faith-based institutions, and local businesses by training “Community Navigators” to provide mass education and outreach, while connecting people to community-based legal assistance in order to remove barriers for prosperity and increase access to family sustaining employment. Additionally, this program will partner with business associations to reduce barriers to employment, provide certified training, and address labor shortage for Illinois employers.

How does the “Illinois Access to Justice and Opportunity” program work?

1. Recruit, Train and Organize a network of hundreds of Community Navigators
   Fund Community-Based Organizations throughout the state to recruit and train 200 Community Navigators to inform 20,000 Illinoisians who are low-income and vulnerable communities of color on knowing their rights, expungement and legal options, and mental health and legal services. Community Navigators directly connect individuals to the services offered by the program.

2. Provide Legal Representation
   Fund and train 20 Community-Based Legal Service Organizations throughout Illinois to conduct 10,000 legal screenings and provide legal representation.

3. Create a Community Mental Health Program
   Fund Community-Based Mental Health Programs that will serve the same population to provide a holistic approach.

4. Create a Pipeline for Employment
   Community Navigators and legal professionals will create partnerships with business and trade associations to make direct connections to certified training programs and employment opportunities.

The Illinois Access to Justice Program Act would be used to roll out a statewide program to strengthen our vulnerable and resilient communities’ existing infrastructure by training Community Navigators on presentations including know your rights and legal options and connect communities to free legal representation, mental health services, and employment opportunities.
Community and Civic Organizations
Westside Justice Center
Baptist Ministers Conference of Chicago
Lawndale Christian Law Center
Moms United Against Violence and Incarceration
Community Renewal Society
Westside Health Authority
The Westside Coalition of Black Marijuana Entrepreneurs
Trinity UCC Justice Watch Team
University YMCA, Champaign
Mt. Carmel Martial Arts Academy
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Nehemiah Trinity Rising
The BPP Illinois History Project
First Ladies Health Initiative
GrowthPlay
Greater Austin Independent Political Organization
Centro de Información
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos
Centro Romero
Alivio Medical Center
Bakers Dojo of Karate Bodybuilding Science and Education
Erie Neighborhood House
First Defense Legal Aid
HANA Center
Instituto del Progreso Latino
Illinois Faith Based Association
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
Indo-American Center
The Resurrection Project
Syrian Community Network
Spanish Community Center
Southwest Organizing Project
Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project
Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of IL
The United Martial Arts Association

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Mark Harris, President and CEO, Illinois Science and Technology
Terry Howerton, CEO, Tech Nexus
Jaime Di Paulo, President and CEO, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Sergio Suarez, President and CEO, NAIMA
Judith De La Mora Macias, President, Latinas In Action
Carole Browe Segal, Co-founder, Crate and Barrel
David MacNeil, President & CEO, WeatherTech
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Scott Grams, Executive Director, Illinois Landscape Contractors Association
Dave Bender, American Council of Engineer Companies of Illinois
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Chinatown Chamber of Commerce
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