



Latino Policy Forum Statement

Response to Illinois Fiscal Year 2020 Budget

CHICAGO – To steal the words out of Governor JB Pritzker’s mouth, the General Assembly’s passage of the state’s Fiscal Year 2020 Budget was a watershed moment for Illinois. Gov. Pritzker arrived in office with a \$3.2 billion budget deficit and almost \$15 billion in unpaid bills and debt. The FY20 budget he proposed focused on strengthening three key areas: education, health and human services, and public safety. He also emphasized a capital plan that included investments in Illinois’ facilities and transportation infrastructure.

The governor dreamed big, and the General Assembly made most of his dreams come true.

Last week, the governor, flanked by fellow elected leaders and community advocates, signed a bipartisan-supported balanced budget, along with a fair tax plan that will go before voters in November to ensure 97 percent of Illinoisans pay the same in taxes or less, while the wealthiest 3 percent pay their fair share.

“When I took office five months ago, I laid out an ambitious agenda for the people of Illinois,” Gov. Pritzker said at the signing. “It was an agenda that sought to put state government back on the side of working families by raising wages and creating jobs, by investing in the critical human services that make us strong and restoring fiscal stability after years of crisis. Today, I’m proud to say we made real progress with one of the most consequential and transformative legislative sessions in our state’s history.”



The governor has stated that his proposed budget was just the first stage in a multi-year endeavor to get Illinois fiscally stable while eliminating its structural deficit. He has highlighted plans to create new revenue that lead to a balanced budget; one of those streams being the progressive income tax, or “fair tax plan” that the Latino Policy Forum has been advocating for years. This not only helps solve the budget problem but makes our tax system fairer. In addition, the Forum also supported his signing of a new minimum wage bill.

The Forum and its Acuerdo allies accepted Gov. Pritzker’s invitation to help his administration create a fairer budget and worked tirelessly to remind legislators that whatever benefits Latino families benefits all Illinoisans.



The Forum actively advocated for the following:

Illinois State Board of Education budget

The state has an obligation to fairly fund public schools and ensure equitable access to quality educational programming. In 2017, Illinois passed the [Evidence-Based Funding Formula](#) (EBM) and is expected to have a fully funded formula by 2027. The FY20 budget invests \$375 million for EBM, a 5 percent increase from the previous year.

These additional resources put the state on the right path to meet the goal of fully funding the formula by 2027.

Moving forward with EBM, the administration should consider the critical role bilingual education programming provides for the growing population of English Learners.

In February, the Pritzker administration proposed a \$100 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG). The FY20 budget reflects a \$50 Million increase to ECBG, which brings the funding level up to \$543.7 million.

Despite this substantial increase, the Forum continues to advocate for additional resources for Early Care and Education. These resources are necessary to adequately serve and provide quality learning in underserved communities in our state.

Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) budget

On May 28, lawmakers supported a \$567 million increase to the IDHS budget to help children and their families. A strong commitment to programs that improve the healthy development of children and the earning potential of their caregivers is crucial for a thriving Illinois. Supporting Illinois' working families, especially Latinos, through these programs will result in a stronger, more resilient economy.

The following increases are critical to highlight:

- \$28.2 million increase to the [Child Care Assistance Program](#). This is a 7 percent increase from the previous funding level. This increase would allow for an expansion of childcare eligibility, from 185 percent to 200 percent below the Federal Poverty Level. Additionally, these additional resources will help IDHS with outreach to engage families in the CCAP program and restructure copayments for the program.
- \$12 million increase to Early Intervention Program services for children with developmental delays. This increase will allow for more children to access services and provides automatic eligibility for children who have been exposed to a toxic substance, including lead.



- Level funding for the [Healthy Families](#) and the [Parents Too Soon](#) programs, which provide vital support services to new and growing families.

Our allies at Housing Action Illinois, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and other housing advocates have been working to get funding for homeless prevention, which saw drastic cuts under the previous governor. The FY20 budget comes with an increase of almost \$4 million dollars to homeless prevention, \$1 million more to homeless youth programs and an increase of \$1.5 million to the Parent Mentor Program.

Immigration Budget

The Illinois General Assembly approved moderate funding increases for the Illinois Welcoming Centers and Immigrant Integration Services Line Item:

- Funding for the Immigrant Integration Services line item increased to \$6.5 million
- Funding for the Illinois Welcoming Centers increased to \$1.6 million

Immigrant Tenant Protection Act

The Forum was proud to have been part of a coalition of organizations that helped advocate for the passage of the Immigrant Tenant Protection Act (ITPA). The Forum, its *Acuerdo* network, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law worked tirelessly to pass the bill, which had been vetoed by the previous governor last year.

Once signed, the ITPA will address a specific concern: Unethical landlords who abuse their power over tenants based on tenants' immigration status. It prohibits landlords from threatening to disclose a tenant's immigration status with the intent of intimidating the tenant, retaliating against the tenant for exercising his or her rights, or coercing the tenant to surrender possession. The bill also prohibits a landlord from bringing an eviction lawsuit based solely on the tenant's immigration status. Landlords should not be able to use tenants' immigration status to abuse the tenants or as a tool to escape landlord responsibilities.

Equally important, the bill does not restrict or diminish landlords' rights. They will still have the power to legally evict tenants who default on rent or violate the terms of a lease. The bill does not limit the information landlords can collect to screen tenants, such as identification documents. It does not prohibit landlords from complying with any legal obligation under federal, state, or local law, including restrictions on public assistance.

Capital Construction

The FY20 budget included substantial gains for affordable housing and early childhood capital investments. The budget allocates:

- \$200 million for affordable housing.



- \$45 billion for construction to address infrastructure needs.
- \$100 million set aside in the Rebuild Illinois Fund for Early Childhood capital projects, a substantial investment for the state's growing early care and education services. In 2009, \$45 million was invested in the Early Childhood Construction Grant, but only 6 percent of the applicants received the money because there wasn't enough to go around. This investment shows a more than doubling of the investment in Early Childhood capital projects for FY20, which will be funded through an increase in taxes, goods and services, including increased gas tax, cigarette tax and vehicle registration fees.

Elimination of Basic Skills

Over several years, the Forum has provided advocacy on the use of basic skills to determine entry for educator preparation programs. The Forum submitted testimony to the General Assembly on the weak empirical link between standardized exams and teacher effectiveness in the classroom. The Forum has also conducted analysis to demonstrate racial bias in standardized exams like the test of academic proficiency (TAP), SAT, and ACT. SB1952, sponsored by Sen. Andy Manar and Rep. Sue Scherer, will eliminate the basic skills requirement and allow for an individual to be paid while satisfying the student teaching requirement. Eliminating these requirements makes it easier for teacher candidates to become teachers.

Fair Tax

A progressive income tax plan, which many ILA members signed a letter in support of, passed! Now the plan will go to voters to decide in November 2020 on whether the state should change from its current flat tax system to a graduated tax based on income. Please See article in link below.

<https://abc7chicago.com/politics/illinois-graduated-income-tax-plan-will-go-to-voters-bill-passes-house/5319069/>

Corporate Board Diversity

The Forum's Illinois Latino Agenda sent a letter to the governor earlier this year highlighting the fact that over 70,000 Latino owned and over 144,000 black owned businesses in the state generate more than \$30 billion in annual revenue. However, as the Chicago Tribune reported, a review of the state's 30 largest companies found that: While African Americans make up 14 percent of Illinois' population, they hold just 9 percent of the director seats. Latinos, who are 17 percent of the state's population, hold just 2 percent of director seats. Meanwhile, women, who are 51 percent of the state's population, hold just 26 percent of the board seats.

The Forum and the Latino Agenda threw their support behind legislation that called for publicly owned corporations headquartered in Illinois to have more African Americans, Latinos and women named to their boards of directors. However, the final bill that passed the General Assembly was a pared down version of the original and, instead of mandating diversity appointments, It instead requires that corporations report on the number of women and minorities on their boards. It's still an important step that establishes a mechanism for reporting and accountability.



Census 2020

The Forum was pleased to learn that \$29 million dollars has been appropriated from the General Revenue Fund for grants to community providers and local governments to fund Census 2020 outreach, particularly for reaching hard-to-count communities. This is a substantial increase from the \$1.5 million allocated the previous year.

The Forum has been a tireless advocate for census outreach to ensure a complete count, and in May coordinated Latino Unity Day, an annual day of advocacy in Springfield that carried the theme this year of the importance of census. More than 400 people from across the state attended and the event was highlighted by Gov. Pritzker's and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton's participation.

Finally, the Forum congratulates our allies at the Campaign for a Welcoming Illinois, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) and Illinois Business Immigration Coalition (IBIC), who championed a slate of successful pro-immigrant measures that included the [Keep Illinois Families Together Act](#), the [Private Detention Facility Moratorium Act](#), the [RISE Act](#) and the [Illinois Access to Justice Program](#).