

2026 Policy and Advocacy Agenda



CORE PILLARS

Speak with a Collective Voice for the Health and Human Service Sector.

We start by listening to our community-based partners. We then amplify and strengthen the collective voice of human services so we can break down silos, compel investment in a stronger sector, and create thriving communities.

COLLABORATION

Advocate for Robust Public Investment in Health and Human Services.

Our state budget is a moral document; it represents the belief our government must invest in the well-being of all Illinoisans. We press decision-makers to boldly and equitably fund all human services, with the knowledge that a well-supported sector is essential to community health and well-being.

Promote the essential value of Human Services in our society.

Human services matter to everyone in every community. We strive to be a leader in developing key resources that advance equity, increase awareness of the issues facing the human services sector, and reframe public perception of the impact of these essential services in our communities.

ADVOCACY

Address the root causes of inequity in our sector.

Structural inequities built into society and our sector must be addressed to achieve meaningful systems change. Our advocacy must acknowledge the role of systemic racism within state government, within health and human service workforce and delivery systems, and in the communities our coalition partners serve.

EQUITY

CONNECTION

CORE VALUES

Long Term Commitment: We will advocate for continual, increased state funding of health and human services, year over year and push for equitable policies that address the needs of the sector and promote community well-being.

Short Term Targets:

- Write a new policy that directly works to increase wages of frontline workers at community-based human service organizations.
- Support and co-develop revenue proposals that cultivate equity and decrease burdens for Illinoisians.
- Identify pain-points experienced by organizations that receive state funding and create policy amendments that reduce red-tape and administrative burden.
- Grow participation in our Living Wages, Thriving Communities campaign among frontline human service workers across Illinois.
- Monitor, respond to, and keep our partners informed of federal executive orders, budget cut proposals, and policy changes at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that impact our sector.
- Develop and join national platforms to collectively support lawsuits, ballot initiatives and state policies, and meet with Members of Congress who protect human services.
- Represent and support the human services sector at key working groups, policy tables, and advisory councils both locally and nationally.

2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

Together, these proposals advance a comprehensive strategy to stabilize the human services workforce, close long-standing pay inequities, and modernize the state systems that community providers rely on to deliver care.

HUMAN SERVICES WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY ACT ([HB4450](#) // [SB2883](#))

Stabilize and grow the human services workforce through fair, inflation-adjusted state funding.

The Human Services Workforce Sustainability Act invests in community-based providers so they can pay fair, competitive wages and retain workers essential to communities across Illinois. Building on the Living Wages, Thriving Communities Resolution, the bill establishes a funding floor that reflects inflation and the true cost of service delivery, bringing FY28 grant levels to at least 25% above FY21 levels. Beginning in FY29, grants would increase annually by the greater of 3% or CPI, with the majority of new funding dedicated to wages and benefits for human service professionals.

[Fact Sheet](#)

HUMAN SERVICES EQUITABLE PAY TASKFORCE ([HB5174](#))

Establish a shared, data-driven roadmap to close wage gaps in the human services sector.

The Human Services Equitable Pay Taskforce establishes a cross-sector body within IDHS to examine wage inequities between community-based human service professionals and state employees performing similar work. Grounded in research showing that 82% of human service workers do not earn a living wage, the taskforce will analyze reimbursement rates, wage growth, recruitment and retention challenges, and workforce pipeline supports. Bi-annual findings will inform future funding and policy decisions that advance equitable pay and long-term workforce sustainability. [Fact Sheet](#)

HUMAN SERVICES PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM ([HB4362](#)//[SB2901](#))

Sustain a proven tool to recruit and retain the human services workforce.

The Illinois General Assembly unanimously passed SB3925 (PA 102-1089) to support underpaid frontline human service workers carrying significant student loan debt. Over the last two fiscal years, the program has received \$6.5M in appropriations and has already demonstrated strong impact, with more than 300 workers receiving loan repayment assistance and over 50% of applicants identifying as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). In partnership with ICOY, we are seeking an additional \$5M in FY27 to expand access and sustain this effective workforce retention strategy. [Fact Sheet](#)

COMMUNITY PARTNER FAIR CONTRACTING PACKAGE ([HB4707](#)//[SB2844](#))

Reduce administrative burden and ensure timely, predictable state funding for community providers.

The Community Partner Fair Contracting Package advances three coordinated bills addressing GATA, Prompt Payment, and Court of Claims to improve the timeliness and predictability of state contracts, payments, and claim resolution. Illinois Partners is leading the GATA bill, which codifies timelines for issuing grants and contracts and removes arbitrary limits on indirect costs. Together, these reforms support service continuity, workforce stability, and contracts that reflect the true cost of delivering care in communities across Illinois. [Fact Sheet](#)



Living Wages, Thriving Communities: *Fair Pay for Human Services Now!*

Illinois Partners leads the statewide Living Wages, Thriving Communities campaign, calling for increased state funding for human services contracts and advocating for wage increases for workers in the sector. The campaign engages frontline workers, human services organizations, coalition partners, legislators, and the public to push the State to responsibly invest in the well-being of all Illinoisans by fairly funding the health and human services workforce.

While the campaign is a long-term effort to secure better pay and stability for workers at community-based human service organizations, the 2026 focus is on advancing key workforce legislation, including the Human Services Workforce Sustainability Act, the Human Services Equitable Pay Taskforce, and the Human Services Professional Loan Repayment Program, and ensuring the Illinois General Assembly prioritizes the sector through meaningful, sustained investment.

Endorse the campaign [here](https://livingwageil.org) and learn more at livingwageil.org

COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

Illinois Partners for Human Service works with associations and coalitions across the state to address systemic issues and promote equitable funding for Human Services and our workforce.

Illinois Partners represents the sector in the following coalitions:

The Health and Human Service Coalition of Illinois
The Responsible Budget Coalition
Illinois Commission on Poverty Elimination and Economic Security
Illinois Family Caregiver Coalition
Protect our Care IL
State of Illinois Health Improvement Plan Committee (SHIP)
The Chicago Alliance for Collaborative Effort (CACE)
Illinois Skills for Good Jobs Agenda