

1 AN ACT concerning commissions.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Illinois African-American Family Commission Act.

6 Section 5. Legislative findings. It is the policy of this
7 State to promote family preservation and to preserve and
8 strengthen families. Over 12 million people live in Illinois.
9 African-Americans represent 15% of the population and 26% of
10 the residents living in Cook County. Despite some progress over
11 the last few decades, African-Americans in Illinois continue to
12 lag behind other racial groups relative to indicators of
13 well-being in education, employment, income, and health.
14 According to the 2000 U.S. Census, just 26% of the
15 African-American population over 25 years of age in Illinois
16 completed their high school education; 6% held an associate's
17 degree; less than 10% (9%) held a bachelor's degree; less than
18 5% (3%) held a master's degree; and less than one percent held
19 either a professional (.8%) or doctoral (.4%) degree.

20 These levels of education attainment reflect more
21 fundamental problems with retaining African-Americans in
22 school. The Illinois State Board of Education reported that for
23 the 2001-2002 school year, 36,373, or 6%, of students enrolled
24 in public high schools dropped out. Thirty-nine percent of
25 these students were African-Americans; 38% were White; 21% were
26 Hispanic; and 2% were classified as Other.

27 Although African-Americans make up 18% of the high school
28 population, they are disproportionately represented in the
29 number of students who are suspended and expelled. In the
30 2001-2002 school year, 29,068 students were suspended from
31 school. Forty-seven percent were White, 37% were
32 African-American, 14% were Hispanic, and 1% were classified as

1 Other. In regards to expulsions Statewide, the total number of
2 high school students expelled was 1,651. Forty-three percent
3 were African-American, 41% were White, 14% were Hispanic, and
4 2% were classified as Other. Within Chicago public schools, 448
5 students were expelled. Seventy-seven of these students were
6 African-American; 27% were White; 14% were Hispanic; and 4%
7 were classified as Other. The fact that African-Americans are
8 more likely to be suspended or expelled from school also
9 contributes to the high dropout rate among African-American
10 high school students.

11 In addition to educational challenges, African-Americans
12 face challenges in the areas of employment and income. In the
13 year 2000, the unemployment rate for African-Americans age 16
14 years or older was 15% compared to only 6% for the total
15 Illinois population. Moreover, the median household income of
16 African-Americans in Illinois was \$31,699 compared to \$46,590
17 for the total Illinois population, and the percentage of
18 African-American families below the poverty level in Illinois
19 was 26% percent in 1999 compared to 10.7% for the total
20 Illinois population in that same year.

21 Indicators of child welfare and criminal justice reveal
22 still more challenges that African-American families face in
23 Illinois. In 2000, African-American children represented 18%
24 of children 18 years of age and under, but comprised 73% of
25 children in substitute care. African-Americans are also
26 overrepresented in the criminal justice population. Of the
27 total Illinois adult inmate population in the year 2000, 65%
28 were African-American. During this same time period,
29 African-American youth represented 58% of the juvenile inmate
30 population in Illinois.

31 While the leading causes of death among African-Americans
32 are the same as those for the general population in Illinois,
33 African-Americans have a higher rate of death per 100,000
34 residents. The rate of overall deaths per 100,000 residents
35 among African-Americans in the year 2000 was 1,181; 847 for
36 Whites; and 411 for those classified as Other. The rate of

1 cancer-related deaths per 100,000 residents by racial or ethnic
2 groups in 2000 was: 278 African-Americans; 206 Whites; and 110
3 of those classified as Other. The rate of diabetes-related
4 deaths per 100,000 residents among African-Americans in 2000
5 was 41 compared to 23 for Whites and 13 for those classified as
6 Other. The rate of deaths per 100,000 residents by heart
7 disease among African-Americans in 2000 was 352 compared to 257
8 for Whites and 120 for those classified as Other. The rate of
9 deaths per 100,000 residents by stroke among African-Americans
10 in 2000 was 75; 60 for Whites; and 35 for those classified as
11 Other.

12 African-Americans had higher rates of smoking and obesity
13 than other racial groups in Illinois in 2001. African-Americans
14 accounted for more of the new adult/adolescent AIDS cases,
15 cumulative adult/adolescent AIDS cases, and number of people
16 living with AIDS than other racial groups in Illinois in the
17 year 2002. Still, 23% of uninsured persons in Illinois are
18 African-American.

19 These huge disparities in education, employment, income,
20 child welfare, criminal justice, and health demonstrate the
21 tremendous challenges facing the African-American family in
22 Illinois. These challenges are severe. There is a need for
23 government, child and family advocates, and other key
24 stakeholders to create and implement public policies to address
25 the health and social crises facing African-American families.
26 The development of given solutions clearly transcends any one
27 State agency and requires a coordinated effort. The Illinois
28 African-American Family Commission shall assist State agencies
29 with this task.

30 The African-American Family Commission was created in
31 October 1994 by Executive Order to assist the Illinois
32 Department of Children and Family Services in developing and
33 implementing programs and public policies that affect the
34 State's child welfare system. The Commission has a proven track
35 record of bringing State agencies, community providers, and
36 consumers together to address child welfare issues. The ability

1 of the Commission to address the above-mentioned health issues,
2 community factors, and the personal well-being of
3 African-American families and children has been limited due to
4 the Executive Order's focus on child welfare. It is apparent
5 that broader issues of health, mental health, criminal justice,
6 education, and economic development also directly affect the
7 health and well-being of African-American families and
8 children. Accordingly, the role of the African-American Family
9 Commission is hereby expanded to encompass working
10 relationships with every department, agency, and commission
11 within State government if any of its activities impact
12 African-American children and families. The focus of the
13 Commission is hereby restructured and shall exist by
14 legislative mandate to engage State agencies in its efforts to
15 preserve and strengthen African-American families.

16 Section 10. Illinois African-American Family Commission
17 established. The African-American Family Commission shall be
18 renamed and established as the Illinois African-American
19 Family Commission.

20 Section 15. Purpose and objectives.

21 (a) The purpose of the Illinois African-American Family
22 Commission is to guide the efforts of and collaborate with the
23 Department on Aging, the Department of Children and Family
24 Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity,
25 the Department of Corrections, the Department of Human
26 Services, the Department of Public Aid, the Department of
27 Public Health, the Department of Transportation, and others to
28 improve and expand existing human services and educational and
29 community development programs for African-Americans. This
30 will be achieved by:

31 (1) Monitoring existing legislation and programs
32 designed to address the needs of African-Americans in
33 Illinois;

34 (2) Assisting State agencies in developing programs,

1 services, public policies, and research strategies that
2 will expand and enhance the social and economic well-being
3 of African-American children and families; and

4 (3) Facilitating the participation of
5 African-Americans in the development, implementation, and
6 planning of community-based services.

7 The work of the Illinois African-American Family
8 Commission shall include the use of existing reports, research
9 and planning efforts, procedures, and programs.

10 Section 20. Appointment; terms. The Illinois
11 African-American Family Commission shall be comprised of 15
12 members who shall be appointed by the Governor. Each member
13 shall have a working knowledge of human services, community
14 development, and economic public policies in Illinois. The
15 Governor shall appoint the chairperson or chairpersons.

16 The members shall reflect regional representation to
17 ensure that the needs of African-American families and children
18 throughout the State of Illinois are met. The members shall be
19 selected from a variety of disciplines. They shall be
20 representative of a partnership and collaborative effort
21 between public and private agencies, the business sector, and
22 community-based human services organizations.

23 Members shall serve 3-year terms, except in the case of
24 initial appointments. One-third of initially appointed
25 members, as determined by lot, shall be appointed to 1-year
26 terms; 1/3 shall be appointed to 2-year terms; and 1/3 shall be
27 appointed to 3-year terms, so that the terms are staggered.
28 Members will serve without compensation, but shall be
29 reimbursed for Commission-related expenses.

30 The Department on Aging, the Department of Children and
31 Family Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic
32 Opportunity, the Department of Corrections, the Department of
33 Human Services, the Department of Public Aid, the Department of
34 Public Health, and the Department of Transportation shall each
35 appoint a liaison to serve ex-officio on the Commission.

1 Section 25. Funding. The African-American Family
2 Commission shall receive funding through appropriations
3 available for its purposes made to the Department on Aging, the
4 Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of
5 Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of
6 Corrections, the Department of Human Services, the Department
7 of Public Aid, the Department of Public Health, and the
8 Department of Transportation.

9 Section 30. Reporting. The Illinois African-American
10 Family Commission shall annually report to the Governor and the
11 General Assembly on the Commission's progress toward its goals
12 and objectives.

13 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
14 becoming law.