



HR0722

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives recognize that there are distressed counties and communities throughout Illinois that struggle with many economic and social problems including crime, unemployment, poverty, mortgage foreclosures, declining property values, deficiencies in public health services, and deficits in public education; and

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WHEREAS, In recent years these economic and social problems have become more prevalent and they have exacerbated existing conditions which include: inequalities in access to justice in the civil court system, an overburdened and ineffective criminal justice system, overcrowded correctional facilities, increased homelessness, inadequate educational opportunities, insufficient affordable housing, inadequate delivery of social services to the less fortunate, and deficiencies in the availability and quality of public health services; and

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WHEREAS, Some counties and communities disproportionately experience these serious social and economic ills; for example, Illinois counties which had 16% or more of their population in poverty in 2010 included: Alexander, Champaign, Coles, Cook, Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Lawrence, McDonough, Macon, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pike, Pope, Pulaski, Saline,

1 Union, Vermilion, White, Williamson, and Winnebago; and
2 municipalities with a population of over 100,000 which had
3 family poverty rates of 10% or more are: Aurora, Chicago,
4 Joliet, Naperville, Peoria, Rockford, and Springfield; and

5 WHEREAS, It is important to take a comprehensive approach
6 to the ongoing crisis of distressed counties and communities in
7 Illinois and a significant poverty rate is among the best
8 indicators that a community is in distress; and

9 WHEREAS, Care must be taken when addressing poverty and its
10 associated problems in counties with distressed communities
11 because an emphasis on serving the largest number of people in
12 poverty will miss other areas of the State with significant
13 poverty problems and an emphasis on areas with the highest
14 rates of poverty will ignore large populations in need, as
15 shown by these facts:

16 (1) Cook County has the highest number of persons
17 living in poverty (which amounts to nearly 50% of the State's
18 poverty population), but DuPage County (which has historically
19 been considered to be a wealthy county with a small low-income
20 population) has the second-highest number of persons in
21 poverty;

22 (2) the 10 poorest counties in Illinois, as measured by
23 poverty rate, are generally downstate with small total
24 populations and while their poverty rates are very high (the

1 highest county rate is 31.1%, with an average for all 10 of the
2 poorest counties of 21.6%), these counties collectively
3 account for less than 10% of the State's total poverty
4 population;

5 (3) the 10 counties with the highest numbers of persons
6 in poverty are, for the most part, near urban centers with 5 in
7 the Chicago metropolitan area and these 10 counties include
8 over 70% of the State's poverty population;

9 (4) a Statewide emphasis on the top 10 counties with
10 high poverty rates will ignore the needs of 94% of the State's
11 poverty population, but an emphasis on the 10 counties with the
12 highest numbers of people in poverty will deemphasize the
13 counties with the highest poverty rates; and

14 WHEREAS, The U.S. Census Bureau on September 12, 2012,
15 announced that, in 2011:

16 (1) the median household income in the United States
17 declined by 1.5% from the 2010 median, which was the second
18 consecutive annual drop;

19 (2) the weighted average poverty threshold for a family
20 of four in 2011 was \$23,021;

21 (3) the nation's official poverty rate was 15.0
22 percent, with 46.2 million people in poverty;

23 (4) and although the poverty rate and number of people
24 remained statistically unchanged since 2010, this is the fourth
25 year in a row with such significant amounts of poverty in this

1 country; and

2 WHEREAS, The poverty rate in Illinois was 14.2% in 2011 and
3 this amounts to a 42% increase in the poverty rate in Illinois
4 from 2007 to 2011; and

5 WHEREAS, Living in an area with a high poverty rate may
6 include threats to life itself; for example, a recent
7 comparison of 2 sets of Chicago neighborhoods, the 5 poorest
8 and the 5 least poor, showed that:

9 (1) the poorest neighborhoods had a homicide rate that
10 is 11 times the homicide rate in the least poor neighborhoods;

11 (2) the mortality rate for the leading causes of death
12 in Chicago (cancer, heart disease, diabetes-related illnesses,
13 stroke, and unintentional injury) is 5 times higher in the 5
14 poorest neighborhoods than it is in the 5 least poor
15 neighborhoods;

16 (3) the infant mortality rate is 2 1/2 times higher in
17 the poorest neighborhoods than in the 5 least poor
18 neighborhoods; and

19 (4) that the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) due to
20 homicide in the 5 poorest neighborhoods was 2,172 for every
21 100,000 residents (assuming a life expectancy of 75 years)
22 compared to the YPLL homicide rate of only 186 in the 5 least
23 poor neighborhoods (the concept of Years of Potential Life Lost
24 is an estimate of the average years a person would have lived

1 if he or she had not died prematurely); and

2 WHEREAS, So long as these social and economic problems are
3 not successfully addressed in distressed counties and
4 communities, the cost to tax payers in Illinois for the many
5 programs operated or funded by the State will only increase;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, State government resources are expended in
8 ever-increasing amounts to address these social and economic
9 problems and those expenditures are a significant drain on the
10 State's road to financial stability; and

11 WHEREAS, There exist numerous ways for State government
12 programs to be operated more efficiently and more economically;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, State government, taxpayers, and those living in
15 distressed counties and communities with a significant poverty
16 problem could benefit from the creation of a State action plan
17 that identifies: modifications that should be made to existing
18 State programs so as to dramatically improve the delivery of
19 services, reduce the cost of those services, and eliminate
20 wasteful spending; how leadership programs and new educational
21 opportunities could foster and equip new leaders; and ways in
22 which State government could actively create a change

1 environment that will have numerous positive impacts; and

2 WHEREAS, If more effective, efficient, and economical ways
3 to deliver social, law enforcement, correctional, educational,
4 and medical programs can be developed, then significant strides
5 can be made in the overall welfare of the distressed counties
6 and communities and those solutions could be replicated, with
7 adjustments as appropriate, to all communities in Illinois;
8 therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
10 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
11 urge the Governor to create a Distressed Counties and
12 Communities Commission composed of stake holders in distressed
13 counties and communities, representatives of appropriate State
14 agencies, and community leaders to explore, discuss, and
15 coordinate efforts to prepare an action plan to offer enhanced
16 State governmental services in a meaningful way, to foster
17 leadership, and to create programs that can succeed in
18 addressing the myriad social and economic problems that exist;
19 this, in turn, can benefit all Illinois communities; and be it
20 further;

21 RESOLVED, That we urge that the Governor designate an
22 executive department to provide administrative support for the
23 Commission and appoint members of the Distressed Counties and

1 Communities Commission by December 31, 2015, so as to allow the
2 Distressed Counties and Communities Commission to hold its
3 first meeting in January 2016, and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Distressed Counties and Communities
5 Commission be charged with: finding and creating innovative
6 means to address and meet the numerous needs of those who
7 receive State social services; designing plans to assist and
8 enhance the efforts of State agencies and local governments
9 that provide law enforcement and social services; analyzing
10 successful state and local governmental programs in other
11 locales in the subject areas of law enforcement, court
12 administration, corrections, job skill retraining, education,
13 economic opportunity, job creation, social services, and
14 public health; and developing an action plan that includes
15 information about changes and improvements to existing
16 programs, statutes, and regulations that can be made by
17 reallocating existing resources and not increasing State
18 taxes; and be it further;

19 RESOLVED, That we urge the Governor to call upon the
20 Distressed Counties and Communities Commission to hold public
21 hearings and issue a written report of its findings and
22 recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly on
23 or before April 15, 2016; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
2 delivered to the Governor.