

# 2009 State Policy Opportunities: Report on Illinois Poverty



1.5 million Illinoisans experience violations of their human rights due to the impact of poverty on their lives. In these uncertain times, poverty threatens to reach even more people. Yet, greater hardship, spiraling unemployment, increased poverty and homelessness, and weakening financial security for the coming years are *not* inevitable. With swift and wise actions from state policymakers that seize federal opportunities and that specifically address the needs of the most vulnerable, we can create economic stability, promote future prosperity, and ensure human rights for all.

**Leverage federal resources provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to address the unique employment and training needs of people in poverty and those with barriers to employment**--including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Workforce Investment Act programs--to help get families and our economy back on track.

**Increase funding to expand the effective community schools model.** This will provide a range of services to support students to succeed in school and life, including out-of-school learning, comprehensive school health services, family supports, and community activities.

**Create financial products, such as Children's Savings Accounts, to meet the needs of families at all income levels and expand opportunities for savings across the lifespan.** Incorporate savings mechanisms and incentives to encourage asset building and financial education among low-income families.

**Enact comprehensive, progressive reform of Illinois' revenue system** to ensure that the state's priorities can be funded in a sustainable way. Promote tax fairness through an increase in the state Earned Income Tax Credit and other strategies that target those with low incomes.

**Expand funding for new and existing school health centers in the state's capital budget.** This will help build Illinois' health care infrastructure and will also increase access to health care and prevention services, reduce costs associated with hospitalizations and emergency room visits, and decrease risky behaviors and student time lost from school.

**Include significant investments in affordable housing in the state's capital budget.** Affordable housing is a critical part of our infrastructure, provides needed jobs and tax revenue, and ensures that the most vulnerable have a home.