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CHICAGO – The Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty has released *Building a Pathway to Dignity and Hope: A Plan to Cut Extreme Poverty in Half by 2015 in Illinois*. The commission, which began meeting in the fall of 2009, developed the plan in accordance with its charge to comprehensively address poverty in Illinois in accordance with international human rights standards.

“The Preamble of the Illinois Constitution seeks to “eliminate poverty and inequality” in our state and the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty focuses on doing just that. I want to applaud their accomplishments, as they have come together to provide a great service to our state,” says Governor Pat Quinn. “I am highly encouraged by their specific recommendations to improve the lives of Illinoisans living in poverty and particularly those living in extreme poverty.”

In 2009, over 1.6 million people in Illinois were living in poverty, and close to 760,000 of these individuals were living in extreme poverty, which is living at 50% or less of the Federal Poverty Line. The current income for a family of four in extreme poverty is \$11,025 a year or less. Illinoisans living in extreme poverty face serious barriers to opportunity – they are far more likely than others to go hungry, to lack health care, lack access to education and to lack access to decent housing.

The plan’s recommendations, which are being released in conjunction with International Human Rights Day, include establishing a statewide transitional jobs program, making the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program more accessible and better connected to workforce strategies, and expanding the scholarships available to students in poverty so they can attend community college. By providing enhanced supports and creating the infrastructure necessary for individuals to be treated with dignity and be able to access sustained work, the Commission’s plan will create new pathways to opportunity for individuals living in extreme poverty.

“In our current budget environment, it is important we keep in mind how our decisions impact the most vulnerable. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the General Assembly to move forward the different elements of this plan over the next several years.” says Representative Karen Yarbrough (D-Maywood), the primary sponsor of the Commission on the Elimination of Poverty Act.

“The members of this Commission, as well as the many individuals outside of that contributed to this plan, should be commended for their work and their vision. With the release of this plan, our real work begins to ensure that these recommendations are adopted between now and 2015.” said Rev. Dr. Sid Mohn, Co-Chair of the Commission and President of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights.