

Press Release
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Illinois Poised to Make Use of Racial Impact Note Act

Children's Advocates for Change, a statewide children's advocacy organization, is calling on members of the Illinois General Assembly to make use of the new Racial Impact Note Act to improve the well-being of Illinois children.

A year ago today, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed into law groundbreaking legislation creating a state Racial Impact Note Act. Only a handful of states have such measures and Illinois has one of the nation's most comprehensive statutes creating a requirement for production of a racial impact note or statement.

Children's Advocates for Change is an independent advocacy organization committed to the well-being of every Illinois child. Its purpose is to conceive and champion the policies, programs, legislation, and cultural understanding necessary to provide all children with educational success, economic well-being, and safe and loving primary environments.

Under the [Racial Impact Note Act](#), a legislator may request a state agency or board to prepare a statement or note on pending legislation that could negatively impact racial and ethnic minorities¹. It provides a valuable tool for having legislators more closely examine potentially harmful legislation, with respect to racial and ethnic inequities, as well as recognize the benefits a bill may have in eliminating inequities.

"As a state, we need to ensure that our public policies and practices do not cause unintended consequences that further harm people of color," said Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat, President and

¹ Under the Act, a legislator must make the note request before the second reading of the bill in its house of introduction.

Board Member of Children’s Advocate for Change. “The Illinois Racial Impact Note Act is a critical tool in the legislative process that not only helps us achieve transparency at the highest level but creates a platform for public discourse regarding potential impacts a bill may have on black and brown people and their communities. “

Connecticut, New Jersey, Maine, and Virginia are some of the other states with a statute on racial impact notes or statements but some of the state laws may pertain only to a certain subject area such as criminal justice reform. Illinois’ law is broad-based and does not limit the subject area or which agencies are required to produce a note upon request. If a state agency requested to produce a Racial Impact Note cannot ascertain the impact of the proposed legislation on existing racial and ethnic inequities, then the Act requires the agency to state so in the note and explain why it cannot make the determination.

[State Senator Mattie Hunter](#) (D-Chicago) was the Senate sponsor of HB 158, which – along with the language creating the Racial Impact Note Act -contained a number of health care reforms put forward by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

“Racial equity is crucial in the healthcare industry, as we must ensure that everyone is getting quality care,” said Hunter. “A year after its passing, the Racial Impact Note has set the tone for the General Assembly to be more intentional about how legislation will affect marginalized communities. I am proud of all the work we've done to pass a massive health care reform package, and I look forward to furthering our efforts to rectify state systems.”

[State Representative Camille Y. Lilly](#) (D-Chicago) sponsored HB 158 in the House.

“When developing legislation, it’s critically important that we understand the impact it will have on our black and brown communities,” Lilly said. “These communities have too often been overlooked and left behind, particularly when it relates to health, education and school investment. The Racial Impact Note Act is part of an ongoing effort to make Illinois a more equitable state that develops responsible, needed legislation that helps address the needs of every resident.”

The Racial Impact Note Act can help bolster the argument for pending legislation such as the creation a state Child Tax Credit. Poverty can have a tremendous impact on the physical and cognitive development of young children². Yet, Illinois children face great economic disparities. The percentage of children (under age 18) below the federal poverty level in 2020 was 9.2% for

² Research shows approximately 80% of a child’s brain development occurs within the first three years of the child’s life; <https://midb.umn.edu/news/first-1000-days-critical-time-childrens-brain-development>

Illinois white non-Hispanic/Latino children but 36.3% for Illinois African-American children and 19.9% for Illinois Hispanic and Latino children³.

Dara Munson is the President and CEO of Family Focus, a Chicago-based organization serving 19,000 individuals with 11 direct service centers throughout Chicago and Northeastern Illinois providing family supports that include preschool programs, home visits, fitness and nutrition education, and crisis services.

“We know that the need for equitable outcomes begins in the earliest years of life,” said Munson. “We firmly support Children’s Advocates for Change and use of the Racial Impact Note Act. Having a keen understanding of how our state policies impact those children with clear and undeniable data is a major step in ensuring high-quality services.”

Along with use of the Racial Impact Note Act, Children’s Advocates for Change plans to work with lawmakers to build an equity lens into the state budgeting process.

“We need to examine how the state is using its fiscal resources to eliminate racial and ethnic inequities or where additional resources are needed,” said Dr. Green Cruzat. “Using a race equity lens to help undo institutional racism in this country, and to help our children get a good start in life.”

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³ 2020 5-Year American Community Survey Estimate Data, U.S. Census Bureau