

GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY: AN AGENDA FOR CREATING A HEALING-CENTERED STATE

We believe that all youths and families across Illinois have the right to live in a state that centers their healing and wellness. While there are ongoing efforts to help us reach a healing-centered state, we are asking the Illinois General Assembly to prioritize the following:

- Affordable Mental Health and Healthcare Services:**

Protect and expand access to equitable mental health support and healthcare services for youth and families across Illinois, regardless of one's immigration status, income or ability. Investment and development could look like:

- Pipeline of Mental Health Workers:** Creating a pipeline of mental health professionals from different communities, especially from Black and Brown communities, who are encouraged to practice within communities they identify with.

- Reducing Barriers to Recovery:** Shifting low-level drug possession from felonies to misdemeanors in Illinois and investing in mental health supports.

- Challenge Unfair Convictions:** Allow for all people challenge any unfair conviction or sentence, even long after it happened.

- Allow new evidence to reopen cases: Allow people who serve sentences to reopen their cases if they have new evidence of innocence.

- Affordable Housing:** Investment in the building of equitable and affordable housing and the preservation of naturally occurring affordable 2-4 family flats, expand tenant rights, and prevent housing insecurity.

- Disability Inclusion:** Invest in and mandate building ADA standards that support people with mental and physical disabilities throughout Illinois. Make sure students with disabilities get the support they need.

- Parents/guardians, regardless of their economic or immigration status, should have access to and knowledge of paid protective supervision opportunities as parents/guardians should not have to choose between taking care of their children or getting a job.



- **After-School Youth and Family Engagement and Safe Access to education:**

- Invest and keep funding for schools and after-school programs that follow ADA standards at public schools and community centers for youth and families.
- Guarantee the right for a free education for all students regardless of immigration status. It requires public reporting of student referrals to law enforcement, and transparent reporting systems.
- Remove fines, ticket and law enforcement penalties so students facing truancy are met with support and not punishment
- Have young-people's voice centered in policy making to create a safe, inclusive and accessible education system for all.



- **Address the Root Causes of Gun Violence:** Develop and invest in youth-led initiatives that seek to address gun violence and safety at the state level. Development and investment could look like:

- Creating comprehensive youth programming that involves engaging with young people (12 to 18 years old) across communities that have disproportionately been impacted by gun violence.
- Supporting state-wide youth programming designed by young people and adult allies hosted by youth-centered organizations.



- **Immigrant Resources and Inclusion:** Invest resources into programs that seek to support families through housing, economic, and social mobility regardless of one's immigration status.

We urge the General Assembly to take action in support of comprehensive solutions that are driven by community-led initiatives and foster healing and wellness within communities across Illinois.

The Illinois General Assembly must prioritize resources for systems of community care rather than systems of harm (e.g., criminalization and incarceration).

We reserve the right to live in a state that prioritizes our safety and wellness. We will continue to combat the dominant narrative by telling our own stories rooted in our lived experiences as we seek to disrupt systems of inequity and build systems of healing and justice.

We are asking for your support as we work toward building a pathway toward a healing-centered state!

