



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 25, 2026

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***Home for Good* Legislation Will Create Safer, Stronger Communities by Improving Housing and Support Services for People Returning from Prison** *Proposal will reduce homelessness and increase public safety while saving taxpayer money*

SPRINGFIELD – The *Home for Good* Coalition today unveiled [legislation](#) to create safer, stronger communities across Illinois by improving housing and support services for people returning from prison to prevent homelessness, increase public safety and save taxpayers money.

Data from the Loyola Chicago Center for Criminal Justice shows as many as 70% of people struggle with stable housing and homelessness prior to incarceration. Those challenges remain as they leave prison, making housing instability an urgent barrier for people who have met the demands of a criminal sentence and are trying to rejoin society.

Each year, 15,000 people exit Illinois prisons, with the vast majority unable to find stable housing due to widespread inequities in the housing market and gaps in the human services system. This lack of support contributes to a costly cycle in which nearly 40% of people return to Illinois prison within three years of release. The *Home for Good* legislation is designed to break this cycle by creating a comprehensive strategy to ensure successful reentry in a humane and cost-effective manner. The estimated upfront cost is \$50 million.

“Everyone deserves a home, but for decades Illinois has failed to create a statewide strategy to support those returning from prison, essentially forcing homelessness and poverty on thousands of people a year. This has an outsized impact on Black and Brown communities, who already face higher rates of over-policing and incarceration,” said **Ahmadou Dramé, director of the Illinois Justice Project**. “After leaving prison, they become vulnerable to discrimination through an exclusionary human service system, rental and employment policies and laws, which fuel housing instability upon release. Illinois can – and must – take action to create an equitable reentry strategy, which will reap long-term social and economic benefits throughout Illinois.”

Secure housing provides dignity and stability and helps people returning from prison comply with the conditions of their release. This helps reduce the chances of recidivism, which improves public safety. It also saves taxpayer money, which is critically important amid the state’s ongoing budget challenges. Data from the State of Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council shows that each event of recidivism costs taxpayers and society an average of \$199,011 when adjusted for inflation. Annually, that adds up to \$1.1 billion. That’s in addition to more than \$2 billion the state spends each year to fund the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). A reasonable upfront investment in *Home for Good* can help reduce those costs over time.

“*Home for Good* is smart, sensible policy that also happens to be the right thing to do,” said **Sen. Adriane Johnson, D-Buffalo Grove**, the legislation’s Senate sponsor. “At a time when we must invest every penny wisely, this program stands out as a way to save taxpayer money and improve public safety while supporting people who have not received adequate resources from our current system.”

Home for Good will also strengthen the state and local economy, as secure housing empowers more people to work and earn wages, growing the state’s tax base without raising taxes. Illinois Justice Project research found that every \$1

invested in sustainably funding *Home for Good* will result in \$5 in public savings and economic activity over three years. That's a projected \$477 million cost benefit within the first three years alone.

“Illinois can't afford to continue to look the other way when it comes to addressing homelessness and housing insecurity for people returning from prison,” said **Rep. Maurice West, D-Rockford, House sponsor of the bill**. “Under the status quo, we are failing people, failing our communities and leaving hundreds of millions of dollars on the table every year. *Home for Good* establishes the required coordination, accountability, and sustained, at-scale funding that will be revolutionary for our communities.”

Home for Good will formalize into law existing services currently operating on a small scale, and will provide coordinated, interagency oversight to ensure the program is cohesive and effective. The legislation consists of four primary components:

- **Rental Assistance:** The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) will provide rental subsidies to returning residents, helping them access housing so they can focus on building stability and independence.
- **Wraparound Services:** The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) will build on a legacy of successful community-based reentry organizations to create a coordinated system, providing reentry navigation and connecting people to needed services including behavioral health, physical health, job training, transportation, furniture and food, childcare, and more when they return home.
- **Reentry Housing Development:** The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) will help address the statewide affordable housing shortage and minimize the possibility of landlord discrimination while creating economic opportunities for developers and communities impacted by high incarceration.
- **Creates the *Home for Good* Institute.** The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) will establish the *Home for Good* Institute, which will provide cohort-based training and technical assistance to community-based organizations interested in developing and operating reentry housing. This also supports the creation of new rehab and construction jobs in long disinvested communities, fueling economic activity.

More than smart policy, *Home for Good* is compassionate policy that fosters equity and opportunity for people returning from incarceration. *Home for Good* is community-driven, prioritizes collaboration and was crafted with input from people who are formerly incarcerated and housing providers who have identified flaws and gaps in the current system based on their own experiences.

“When I was released from prison in 2021, my housing options were limited and I had to move around a lot before a pastor offered me a small home for a reasonable rent,” said **Maria Garza, co-founder of Challenge II Change, a reentry organization in Aurora**. “With a stable place to live, I was able to continue my education and begin providing help and support to people coming home from prison. I'm proof that programs like *Home for Good* can help people find stability and rejoin their community and begin contributing to the health, healing and well-being of themselves and others.”

“Because of rental assistance I received when I was released from prison, I was able to earn a living and plan my future. In a few short years, I saved up enough money to purchase a building, which now allows me to offer subsidized housing for other people who are returning to the community,” said **Andre Ruddock, founder of Returning Citizens in Memory of Henry Dee and Outreach Coordinator for the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance**. “It's not about where your story begins, it's about where it ends.”

About the Home for Good Coalition

The *Home for Good* Coalition includes more than 60 groups across Illinois, including reentry, affordable housing and community organizations advocating for the expansion of housing and support services for people returning from prison. The coalition aims to create safer and stronger communities through sustainable, coordinated support efforts that reduce homelessness, create opportunity for people returning home and save taxpayer dollars. For more information, please visit <https://homeforgoodillinois.com/>.