

Pritzker Announces Action Plan To Address Racial Disparities In Homelessness

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CHICAGO — Today Governor JB Pritzker joined legislators, other State officials, and researchers to release a comprehensive report on Black Homelessness in Illinois. This study, a collaboration with the University of Illinois Chicago’s Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP), offers an unprecedented and groundbreaking analysis of the systemic factors driving the racial disparities in homelessness, and formulates an Action Plan for Racial Equity (APRE).

IRRPP began its partnership with the Illinois Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH) – an initiative of Governor Pritzker’s – in January 2023. OPEH was created in 2021 with a mission to coordinate pathways to permanent housing for Illinoisans facing housing insecurity. OPEH is the headquarters of the State’s “Home Illinois” initiative.

Governor Pritzker has earmarked \$250 million in the FY25 budget to support implementation of the plan, which supports the overall efforts of Home Illinois. This a \$50 million increase from FY24 funding.

“We know homelessness is a structural problem – one that any individual could face at no fault of their own. We also know homelessness disproportionately impacts our Black community. Addressing and solving this societal issue requires coordinated, data-driven approaches,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “This report provides the framework for our path forward as we continue to keep our eye on the target of effectively ending homelessness in Illinois.”

The report underscores that Black Illinoisans are almost eight times more likely to experience homelessness compared to their white counterparts. This issue is exacerbated by significantly higher eviction rates observed in Black communities, which directly contribute to their increased risk of homelessness. The analysis delves into the root causes, including the enduring effects of racial segregation and discriminatory practices, which have historically limited access to affordable and quality housing for Black residents.

The action plan is a multi-faceted approach designed to address key challenges—including increasing investments in affordable and permanent supportive housing, enhancing the safety net with robust support services, and implementing policies aimed at closing the financial stability and mortality gaps that disproportionately affect Black communities.

“It is unfair and unrealistic to expect anyone to participate in society when they do not have a safe place to rest their head or store their belongings,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. “This crisis in equity reflects a much broader issue: Black people face wider gaps and higher obstacles when it comes to accessing basic needs. I fully support the Governor’s action plan and will continue to uplift equity in my work until every Illinoisan is thriving.”

“When we think about the harms of racial segregation and red lining, we can draw a line to the realities of homelessness,” **Christine Haley, Chief Homelessness Officer for Illinois, said**. “We are releasing today not only the report and roundtable recommendations, but a series of commitments that state leaders are making to reduce the Black and white disparities in rates of homelessness”.

The report was initiated by the Racial Equity Roundtable on Black Homelessness, with representatives from across the state in housing, community development, community organizing and services. It is the result of extensive consultations with Black leaders, state government, and community members across Illinois, ensuring that the

recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of those most affected by homelessness. This collaborative approach underscores the State's dedication to inclusivity and community-driven policy.

"Much of the public conversation about homelessness focuses on individual responsibility and personal choice," **said Iván Arenas, Senior Associate Director at the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at UIC.** "However, the data and analysis in this report demonstrates that we cannot understand homelessness without taking seriously the ways that racism, and particularly structural racism, shape patterns of homelessness. This makes it more likely for Black individuals and families to become unhoused, and much more difficult for them to regain their stability."

"Addressing Black homelessness isn't just about providing shelter – it's about dismantling systems that perpetuate racial disparities, creating pathways to stability, and fostering communities where everyone has equitable access to opportunity and resources," **said State Senator Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago).** "To truly tackle Black homelessness, we must acknowledge and confront systemic barriers head-on."

"As a state, we need to move in a more compassionate direction that uplifts those who face homelessness," **said Speaker Pro Tempore Jehan Gordon-Booth (D-Peoria).** "These discussions are important, and they reiterate the need for consequential action to support our fellow residents."

The full report, titled *Black Homelessness in Illinois: Structural Drivers of Inequality*, along with detailed recommendations and the APRE, is available for public review on the Illinois Department of Human Services website.

About Home Illinois

Home Illinois is the State's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. Home Illinois sets the foundational vision to end homelessness in Illinois through both established and new innovative strategies. Illinois residents, community agencies, and State government will work together to prevent entries into shelter. When literal homelessness does occur, the experience will be brief and one-time.