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For More Information Contact:

Diane Doherty
Executive Director, Illinois Hunger Coalition
(312) 629-9580
dianedihc@aol.com

Jena Wallander
Communications and Evaluation Coordinator, Illinois Hunger Coalition
(312) 629-9580
jwallander@ilhunger.org

Illinois Hunger Coalition, Chicago Jobs Council, and Illinois Collaboration on Youth Urge Governor Rauner, Governor-Elect Pritzker to Protect Access to Food For More Than 260,000 Illinois Residents

Chicago, IL— Today, the executive directors of the Illinois Hunger Coalition, the Chicago Jobs Council, and the Illinois Collaboration on Youth sent a letter to the offices of Governor Bruce Rauner and Governor-elect J.B. Pritzker urging them to apply for a waiver rescinding work requirements for the approximately 260,000 Illinois residents who are designated as “able-bodied adults without dependents” (ABAWDs). The Federal time limit restricts SNAP eligibility for non-disabled adults without minor children to three out of 36 months unless they are working at least 20 hours per week. Illinois has consistently applied for and received at least a partial or statewide waiver since 1997. Governor Rauner applied for the waiver for 2018 for the entire state except for DuPage County, which was not eligible. For 2019, the state except for DuPage is eligible again, and Governor Rauner has not yet indicated that he will apply.

Diane Doherty, Executive Director of the Illinois Hunger Coalition; Carrie Thomas, Executive Director of the Chicago Jobs Council; and Andrea Durbin, Executive Director of the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, are committed to standing with the vulnerable

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ABAWD population in Illinois. Stating that the current Illinois workforce system is not able to meet the demand of the ABAWD population, that enforcing the time limit would increase administrative burden on the Illinois Department of Human Services, and that SNAP is already a vital work support for low-income workers in our state, Doherty, Thomas, and Durbin said in the letter:

“On behalf of ourselves and our members, we urge you to request a 2019 time-limit waiver as soon as possible. For all the reasons listed above, failing to request this waiver does not make sense for our state. While Illinois’ economy is slowly improving, we continue to face high unemployment and labor surplus rates. Ensuring access to SNAP by applying for a waiver of the time limit is both a compassionate and smart choice for Illinois.”

The 2018 waiver expires on December 31, 2018, meaning that time is of the essence in applying for the waiver and protecting vulnerable individuals in our state. ABAWDs have the lowest incomes on average in Illinois, at just 19% of the federal poverty line or \$2,200 per year. Doherty, Thomas, and Durbin wrote, “Many of our state’s ABAWDs are not ready to work. Sixty-four percent have a high school diploma or less. Many face additional barriers, such as extremely low incomes, health issues, or suspended driver’s licenses due to unpaid fines, mental health conditions, or criminal convictions. These are individuals who need support and training in order to secure lasting employment.”

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About the Illinois Hunger Coalition

The Illinois Hunger Coalition (IHC), founded in 1988, is celebrating 30 years of anti-hunger advocacy. The IHC seeks to #endhungernow by ending hunger’s underlying causes through community organizing, advocating for progressive policy, and public education.

About the Chicago Jobs Council

The Chicago Jobs Council moves people out of poverty through employment using on-the-ground expertise, advocacy, and capacity-building. The Jobs Council’s vision is that all people, regardless of where they start or where they’ve been, can access employment as a pathway out of poverty.

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About the Illinois Collaboration on Youth

ICOY promotes the safety, health, and success of Illinois' children, youth, and families by acting as a collective voice for policy and practice, and by connecting and strengthening the organizations that serve them. We believe that children and youth have the right to enter adulthood with the tools and capacities to succeed, and that Illinois only succeeds when its children, youth, and families thrive.

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