



# **Manar commends comptroller for prioritizing school payments**

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SPRINGFIELD – State Senator Andy Manar praised Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza today for prioritizing long-overdue state payments to school districts, even as the governor’s office continues to present her with millions of dollars in previously undisclosed invoices for payment.

“I commend Comptroller Mendoza for her continued commitment to getting these overdue payments out the door and into the hands of school administrators,” said Manar, a Bunker Hill Democrat and a Senate budget point person.

“It’s outrageous that we expect superintendents to keep our schools running and educate our children with no idea when they can expect to receive vital state payments that account for a significant portion of their annual budgets.”

Mendoza on Monday announced she is releasing \$421 million to Illinois school districts for their final categorical payments from Fiscal Year 2017. These payments help school districts cover costs associated with special education, transportation and free and reduced-price lunches. The payments are separate from general state aid, which is calculated through Illinois’ school funding formula.

The comptroller usually makes four categorical payments per year, but the disbursements have been delayed because of the state budget crisis, adding financial pressure to many school districts that already are struggling.

Illinois currently has \$16.3 billion in unpaid bills, according to the comptroller’s office.

Manar said school districts will continue to find themselves waiting for promised payments until the governor pays down the bill backlog through refinancing of the state’s debt – a step the governor’s office initiated last week after the General Assembly authorized it to do so months ago – and demands more fiscal accountability of state agencies under his control.

Some of that accountability could come through the Debt Transparency Act, legislation Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed on Aug. 18 that would have required state agencies to report every month on unpaid bills they are holding and the estimated interest due on those bills. Illinois taxpayers paid an estimated \$900 million in late payment interest penalties last fiscal year.

Numerous Illinois newspaper editorial boards have encouraged lawmakers to override the governor’s veto of the act (House Bill 3649) during the fall veto session, which begins this week. Manar is the chief Senate sponsor of the measure.

“Any governor should understand the perils of keeping secrets from the accountants,” Manar said. “Withholding information from the comptroller about bills that eventually will require payment is a disservice to the taxpayers of Illinois and to every school district, small business owner and hospital administrator that has to stand in line waiting to be paid.”

