

The Illinois Commission to End Hunger Holds Inaugural Meeting following Gov. Pritzker's Appointment of Fourteen New Commissioners

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CHICAGO – Today, Deputy Governor Sol Flores and Greater Chicago Food Depository CEO Kate Maehr, convened the first meeting for the Illinois Commission to End Hunger. Last year, Governor Pritzker restructured the Illinois Commission to End Hunger and named Flores and Maehr Co-Chairs. The newly rebooted commission will convene listening sessions with stakeholders across the state and recommend measurable solutions toward drastically reducing hunger in Illinois amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Today is the start of an ambitious, yet vital, plan to reduce hunger in Illinois,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “The COVID-19 pandemic and recent civil unrest has dramatically increased food insecurity in communities throughout the state while further exposing the root causes of hunger, including poverty and racial inequity. The commission’s renewed focus builds upon prior work and will produce actionable steps to change the lives of thousands of families across our state.”

Governor Pritzker announced the following appointments to the commission prior to the first meeting:

Robert Biekman will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Biekman is a Public Theologian who currently serves as Senior Pastor of Maple Park and Chicago Urban Strategy Ministry Coordinator with the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC). In collaboration with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, for the past seven years Maple Park UMC operates the Park Café, a feeding program that promotes “dining with dignity.” He has been awarded Community Renewal Society’s John L. Purdy Leadership Award, Advocate Trinity Hospital’s Community Partner

Award, and the Gift of Hope's, Lifesaver Award. Biekman became an ordained minister after 16 years as Corporate Director with Dow Chemical – United Technologies Composite Products a joint venture company. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics from St. Louis University, Master of Business Administration in Public Administration and Operations Research from the University of Bridgeport, and a Master of Divinity in Theology from Payne Theological Seminary.

Gina Cleggs will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Cleggs serves as the Vice President, Community Development & Outreach Services, for Catholic Charities. In this role, she assists individuals, families, and communities in the provision of services which support and enhance growth and development in the areas of community nutrition programs, youth development, employment and training, health promotion, community educational intervention and outreach initiatives and social enterprises.

Diane Doherty will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Doherty is the Executive Director of the Illinois Hunger Coalition (IHC) and has been with IHC since 1996. She has served on the faculty of Georgetown University in Washington, DC for nine years, first in the Department of Pediatrics Child Development Center and later in the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health and worked with states across the country. Prior to that time, she worked with homeless women and their families and organized for affordable housing in low-income communities of color, and for equity in accessing public benefits and affordable health care. Doherty was an adjunct faculty member in the graduate School of Social Services at Catholic University in Washington, DC for eleven years. During that time, she worked with homeless women in Washington, DC and Montgomery County, Maryland. She founded several programs, including New Endeavors by Women, Housing Opportunities for Women, and also a housing program for women organized by survivors of domestic violence (the Network of Abused Women). Doherty was the founding Board Chair of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and served as a long-time board member of the National Coalition for the Homeless. She was a founding Board member of the Grassroots Collaborative in Chicago a grassroots community and labor collaborative dedicated to organizing for racial and economic equity.

Robert Eastern will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Eastern is the current Mayor and Liquor Commissioner of East St. Louis. He previously served as a Human Resource Specialist at East St. Louis School District 189 and Surgical Technologist at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. Eastern attended United States Navy Corpsman Surgical Tech School in Carbondale, Illinois.

Stephen Ericson will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Ericson is the current Executive Director of Feeding Illinois. He is the former Director of Food Procurement, Director of Operations, SDO Certification Mentor, Branch and Operations Manager at

the Northern Illinois Food Bank in Geneva. Ericson additionally worked as Associate Director of the Central Missouri Food Bank. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Industries from the University of Illinois, Master of Business Administration and Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri, and Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Joshua D. Gibb will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Gibb is the President & CEO of the Galesburg Community Foundation. Previously, he served as County Manager for the Knox County Farm Bureau. A former Edgar Fellow, Gibb was awarded the Galesburg Chamber of Commerce 20 Under 40 Young Professional in 2015, Galesburg Lions Club Lion of the Year in 2011, and Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow - Graduate in 2008. Gibb is a member of the Alliance for Illinois Community Foundations, ForeFront, the Rural Schools Collaborative, OSF St. Mary's Advisory Board, the State Education Task Force, Knox County CEO Board, Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce, Galesburg Unit School District #205 Board, and serves as President of the Galesburg Lions Club. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Western Illinois University.

John S. Herring will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. John Herring serves as the Executive Director of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living, the statewide association for Illinois' 22 Centers for Independent Living. He is responsible for advocating for individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Illinois while educating stakeholders and lawmakers concerning the need related to accessibility to community programs, services, education, employment, housing and public transportation. He previously served as the Executive Director of a transitional housing program for homeless veterans in East St. Louis.

Rob Karr will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Karr currently serves as President and CEO of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association. He was previously Vice President, Government and Member Relations for the Retail Merchants Association and a Manager, Government Affairs for the Illinois Manufacturers Association. Karr is a member of the Workers' Compensation Advisory Board and the Employment Security Advisory Board. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Illinois State University.

Jonathan Lavin will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Lavin served for 40 years as the Chief Executive Officer of AgeOptions – formerly the Suburban Cook County Area Agency on Aging, a non-profit corporation designated by the Illinois Department on Aging under the U. S. Older Americans Act and State Act on Aging. His earlier efforts include establishing a fair statewide funding formula for Older Americans Act resources, the Community Care Program, demonstrating and achieving statewide funding for Adult Protective Services including self-neglect, including the National Family Caregiver Support Program in the Older Americans Act; leading the Illinois

Long Term Care Campaign, and chairing the Legislative Committee for the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Lavin served on the Board for n4a - the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging which awarded him the Excellence in Leadership Award for 2017 and the Distinguished Area Agency on Aging Director Award in 1992. He is a past Board Director of the American Society on Aging and was Co-Chairman of the 2015 and 2017 Annual Conference in Chicago, Delegate to the 2005 and 1995 White House Conferences on Aging, former Member of the National Council on Aging Board of Directors, former President of the Illinois Coalition on Aging, and the 1994 recipient of the Phyllis Pinkerton Award for Leadership in Advocacy. He has a Master of Public Administration and Bachelor's in Government from the American University.

Geoffrey Nagle will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Nagle currently works as President and CEO of the Erikson Institute. He previously served as Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Director of the Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, Policy Fellow with the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs, Child Development and Early Learning Consultant with the Louisiana Department of Child and Family Services, State Director of Bright Start and as an Evaluation Consultant for the New Orleans Partnership for Access to Healthcare. Nagle additionally served as a Program Specialist in Social Services, Public Health Epidemiologist and Child Health Manager for the Louisiana Office of Public Health. He is presently a member of the Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center's National Advisory Board and is a former member of Chicago's Early Learning Executive Council, the Illinois Early Learning Council, the Louisiana Governor's Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, and Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana. Nagle earned his Bachelor of Arts from Duke University in Political Science, and his Master of Social Work, Master of Public Health in International Maternal and Child Health, and Doctorate from Tulane University.

Luvia Quiñones will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Quiñones presently serves as Health Policy Director at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), Secretary of the Illinois Association of Free and Charitable Clinics, and Alumni Council Member of the Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies in Chicago. He is the former Assistant Director, New Americans Initiative and Immigrant Family Resource Program Director of the ICIRR. He also served as Community Relations Liaison for the City Colleges of Chicago and Research Assistant with the University of Chicago-Center for Latin American Studies. Quiñones is a past Co-Chair of West Suburban Action Project, Chair of Parish Transformation and Liturgy Committee, St. Sylvester Parish, and a mentor with the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMSA) Mentoring Program at the University of Chicago. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from DePaul University and master's in public policy from the University of Chicago-Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies.

Carolyn Ross will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Ross currently serves as President and CEO of All Chicago Making Homelessness History. She began her career with Youth Service Project, Inc. in Chicago serving as an Outpatient Substance Abuse Counselor, Program Director, and Clinical Director during her tenure. She relocated to the Illinois Quad Cities Community to work with the Center for Alcohol and Drug Services, where she served as an Outpatient Counselor, Program Manager, and Treatment Supervisor before her acceptance to serve as the Executive Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center in Rock Island. Ross later returned to the Center for Alcohol and Drug Services to serve as the Chief Executive Officer. In 2009, Ms. Ross joined TASC, Inc. in Chicago and served as the Vice President of Operations for the statewide organization. She has served as Chief of Staff and Senior Public Service Administrator for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Ross currently serves as President and CEO of All Chicago Making Homelessness History. She is a graduate of DePaul University.

Angela Odoms-Young will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Odoms-Young currently serves as Associate Director of Nutrition at the University of Illinois Hospital and Health System, Associate Professor of Kinesiology and Nutrition at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Associate Member of the Chicago Diabetes and Research Training Center at the University of Chicago. She previously worked as an Assistant Professor of Public Health and Health Education at Northern Illinois University, Research Scientist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Senior Research Specialist at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Project Coordinator for the Monroe County Health Department, New York. Odoms-Young is a board member of the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network, the Association of SNAP-Ed Nutrition Networks and Other Implementing Agencies, Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Chicago Public Schools School Foods Advisory Committee, and the Greater Chicago Food Depository. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Master of Science in Human Nutrition and Doctorate in Community Nutrition from Cornell University.

Audra Wilson will serve on the Commission to End Hunger. Wilson is the President of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law. She is the former Executive Director of the Illinois League of Women Voters, Deputy Chief of Staff to Congresswoman Robin Kelly, Director of Diversity Education and Outreach, Adjunct Professor of Law at Northwestern University School of Law, and Welfare Advocacy Staff Attorney at the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law. Wilson earned her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Spanish from Bucknell University and Juris Doctorate from Valparaiso University School of Law.

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