

# **Illinois Department of Central Management Services Forde Awarded National Walton Award**

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CHICAGO - The National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA) today announced that Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS) Director Janel L. Forde has been awarded the association's 2020 National Walton Award. The highly competitive national award recognizes a state chief administrator for their passion, outstanding service, leadership and commitment to state government.

"Janel shows true innovation and leadership in state government operations and NASCA is honored to award her with the association's most prestigious annual award," said Pam Goins, Executive Director of the National Association of State Chief Administrators. "In a time when most states are faced with uncertain conditions, this year's National Walton Leadership Award recipient is a pivotal influencer among her peers."

Director Forde was appointed to lead CMS, the State's \$7-billion administrative and operational engine, in January 2019 by Governor JB Pritzker. In less than two years, Director Forde has prioritized a new commitment to continuous improvement within CMS, producing the following significant improvements in key strategic areas such as hiring, employee benefits services, administrative hearings, and property management services, affecting virtually every state agency in Illinois:

- Agency Hiring Reform – CMS reduced the lead time for overall, comprehensive hiring from nearly 10 months (at the end of 2018), to just 36 days on average. The hiring process went from 99% paper to 90% electronic, reducing 900 steps and saving the State hundreds of hours in wasted time and money while improving diversity, timeliness of hiring, and skill-levels among new hires. This project earned the 2019 NASCA Award for Innovations in State Government.

- Employee Benefits and Wellness - Illinois' comprehensive wellness program was awarded the 2020 Gold level AETNA Workplace Well-Being award in August 2020 for the State's ongoing commitment to expanding access to workplace wellness resources and programs, notably Illinois' achievement of becoming the first in the nation to install a Higi smart heart monitoring machine in a State building, state correctional facility or university building.

CMS has also collaborated with the State's health plan partners to transform the State's Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Plan enrollment process, saving more than \$13 million in annual direct costs. In addition, CMS avoided \$600 million in employee insurance costs through labor negotiations for the latest union contracts, ending in FY 2023.

- Administrative Hearings - Through a combination of training, strategic hiring, and process improvements, Director Forde has led a dramatic improvement in the operations and performance of the State's antiquated Administrative Hearings process, yielding significant improvements to customer service. Most notably, she led the elimination of a

2,600-case backlog of discrimination complaints in the Illinois Human Rights Commission.

Under Director Forde's leadership CMS directed the State's comprehensive transition to teleworking and Return to Work planning processes for COVID-19, including the procurement of critical personal protective equipment for State agencies with essential workers.

Director Forde has also been a leader within the State of Illinois and among other states on the subjects of diversity, equity, and inclusion. She led the development of a new, web-based platform for all CMS employees with important resources on antiracism and the expansion of cultural heritage commemorations within the agency, including the launch of the State of Illinois' first-ever Juneteenth Celebration.

Director Forde is the first woman and the first Black chief administrator to receive this award since it's creation in 2015.

Prior to leading CMS, Director Forde served in leadership roles for the City of Chicago, including as Chief Operating Officer (COO) on behalf of the Mayor, and as Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Fleet and Facility Management (2FM).

Director Forde also applied her leadership skills to focus on primary and secondary education, first as Director for the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where she also helped to lead its Office of New Schools, and later when she was tapped to serve as Chief Operating Officer for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Before entering the public sector, Director Forde worked as a consultant in the Boston Consulting Group's Chicago office, where she specialized in operations and the financial services sector. She has also held various roles American Express and Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, in New York.

The National Walton Leadership Award was established to recognize state chief administrators for their passion, outstanding service, leadership and commitment to state government. The award was created to honor Ray Walton for his service and dedication to state government and to NASCA. Ray Walton served as the Executive Director for NASCA from February 2011 through February 2015 and the former Director and Chief Operating Officer for the Iowa Department of Administrative Services.