

Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation To Protect And Preserve Cultural Communities In Illinois

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SPRINGFIELD — Governor JB Pritzker signed SB 1833 into law, allowing for the designation of cultural districts across the state. Managed by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), this distinction will promote economic development and empower communities to honor their unique identities and economic contributions to Illinois.

“Illinois’ strength lies in our diversity and this legislation helps protect the rich history of cultural communities across the state while providing them with the tools they need to grow and thrive,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Thanks to the efforts of the Latino Caucus, cultural districts in Illinois can now receive an official designation status, opening the door to economic investment and protecting cultural traditions for generations to come.”

Championed by the Latino Caucus, Senate Bill 1833 allows DCEO to establish criteria and guidelines for the creation of state-designated cultural districts. These designations aim to support economic development, preserve historic traditions and landmarks, and encourage cultural education by providing technical assistance such as promotional support and resources for small businesses.

“DCEO is committed to ensuring that our communities and our local businesses across the state have the support they need to compete and thrive in the 21st century,” said DCEO Acting Director Sylvia Garcia. “This new cultural designation program celebrates the diversity of our state while encouraging economic development and promoting growth and opportunity that preserves and supports our culturally and historically significant communities.”

“Illinois’s diverse cultural and ethnic communities not only deserve recognition through a state designation but also an opportunity to leverage their unique identities and countless contributions. This legislation affords various communities a tool to preserve their legacies for generations to come,” said State Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas (D-Chicago). “I commend the hard work of the Puerto Rican Agenda and my colleague Leader Delia Ramirez, as well as Gov. JB Pritzker for signing this measure today.”

“Recovering from the harm of this pandemic will require strategic investment into our hardest-hit communities. It is important that we recognize and invest into the rich cultural heritage of Illinois diverse communities,” said State Representative Delia Ramirez, Assistant Majority Leader. “This initiative to create State Designated Cultural Districts will empower DCEO to partner with communities to foster and preserve their distinct cultural legacies.”

The legislation also establishes an advisory board composed of state officials and community representatives representing the racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity of Illinois to advise DCEO on the creation of criteria and the certification process.

Criteria for state recognition must include:

- A demonstrated risk of losing cultural identity due to gentrification, displacement, or the impact of COVID-19;

- A history of economic disinvestment;
- Strong support from community organizations and local and regional government officials.

SB 1833 is effective January 1, 2022.