



September 24<sup>th</sup> 2020

The Honorable JB Pritzker  
Governor, State of Illinois  
207 State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

cc:

Sol Flores, Deputy Governor, Office of Governor J.B. Pritzker  
Jesse Ruiz, Deputy Governor, Office of Governor J.B. Pritzker  
Theresa Eagleson, Director, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services  
Carmen Ayala, Superintendent, Illinois State Board of Education

Re: Improving Student Health & Reversing Free Care Rule

Dear Governor Pritzker:

As law enforcement leaders, we strongly urge the state of Illinois to submit a State Plan Amendment (SPA) to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in order to expand school-based Medicaid reimbursement through the “Free Care” policy reversal.

We are members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois, a membership organization of 350 state’s attorneys, sheriffs and police chiefs who take a look at the research about what works to help young children and to reduce crime in the long-term. We know that prioritizing healthy mental and physical development today helps to reduce crime and save money down the line. Conversely, if children encounter health hardships in their earliest years, it could prevent them from achieving successful, healthy adulthoods.

Illinois has the chance to pursue a federal option in which school districts would be able to bill Medicaid for services delivered to eligible students. The only action Illinois must take is to submit a SPA to CMS asking them to remove restrictive language in the state’s Medicaid plan that has prevented schools from doing so prior. [Thirteen states have successfully done this so far](#). It only requires administrative action, would not impact the state’s Medicaid budget, and could benefit students in numerous ways.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more urgent than ever that children have the access to healthcare. Considering there are about 800,000 Medicaid-eligible students enrolled statewide, with about 235,000 of them in Chicago Public Schools, this action could have a huge impact on student health in Illinois. It could help students manage not only medical emergencies, but also students’ chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes, reducing chronic absenteeism in the long-term. Healthy children are more likely to be ready and able to learn, and thus more likely to graduate from high school.

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[StrongNation.org/FightCrime](https://StrongNation.org/FightCrime)

 [FightCrimeIL](#)  [FightCrimeIL](#)

[Other states have seen direct benefits](#) to student health services since pursuing this option. For example, Louisiana has dramatically increased its Medicaid reimbursement dollars, and as a result of that revenue have been able to hire many more school nurses. South Carolina has been able to increase school nursing services and behavioral health treatment in collaboration with the state's Department of Mental Health. Too many of our students have limited access to healthcare outside of school and too many of our schools are understaffed when it comes to school nurses. This is an opportunity to make great progress in both these areas.

Seizing this opportunity could greatly enhance students' physical, mental and behavioral health in Illinois, and therefore give children a better shot at becoming successful, productive adults. In turn, this will benefit our state's community safety and economic well-being for years to come. The undersigned law enforcement leaders urge you to submit the SPA to CMS in order to pursue this option. Thank you for your consideration.

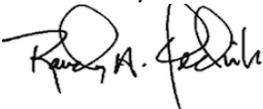
Respectfully,



**Hon. Michael Nerheim**  
Lake County State's Attorney



**Hon. Mark Doran**  
Ford County Sheriff



**Hon. Randy Yedinak**  
Livingston County State's Atty



**Chief Tom Weitzel**  
Riverside Police Department



**Chief Dan O'Shea**  
Rockford Police Department



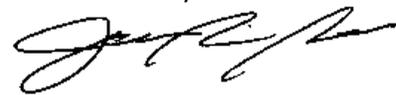
**Hon. Brandon Zanotti**  
Williamson County State's Atty



**Hon. Gerald Bustos**  
Rock Island Sheriff



**Hon. Richard Watson**  
St. Clair County Sheriff



**Hon. Jim Rowe**  
Kankakee County State's Atty