

EXECUTIVE BRIEF:

STATE OF ILLINOIS FY2026 BLACK BUDGET AGENDA A ROADMAP TO INVEST IN OUR BLACK COMMUNITIES

BUDGETING FOR EQUITY – ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN ILLINOIS

The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative is dedicated to building and harnessing the power to create equitable opportunities and outcomes for Black Illinoisans. Founded in 2021 in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, IBAI believes in the power and self-determination of Black Illinois residents and in community power in politics. Black people deserve what all communities deserve – safety, prosperity and investment. We build power with Black communities by expanding the capacity of Black-community focused organizations and advancing budget and public policy.

We believe it is the responsibility of our State government to take the lead in creating conditions for prosperity to thrive, while eradicating the legacy of systemic racism that has shaped communities all across America. Fortunately, the State has an opportunity to guide us toward a more equitable future by using an equity lens in budget decision-making.

IBAI has outlined two elements to address systemic racism. First, the State needs to continue developing a race equity lens in conducting budget analysis. Second, the landscape across local units of government reflects a history of inequitable investment. IBAI recognizes the need to mitigate inequity across local governments to expand economic opportunity for all communities in Illinois.

IBAI has identified pathways to expand equity analysis in decision making. **In this overview, we highlight how the State can expand the capacity to evaluate equity in investment and outcomes during the budget and legislative process, and priorities for Black communities.** For a more detailed look, please read our full report: [State of Illinois Black Budget Agenda](#).

The report **addresses how the state can address investment and outcomes disparities across local governments**, from tax burden, infrastructure needs and the financial condition of cities, towns and villages, as well as equity in funding services in school districts. The challenge to evaluate outcomes falls not only on Agencies and the Governor's Office, but also the General Assembly and all State leaders.

APPLYING A RACE EQUITY LENS TO BUDGETING

Budgeting for results, or results-based budgeting, focuses on aligning resources with desired outcomes, prioritizing what matters most to citizens and stakeholders, and ensuring that spending leads to measurable and impactful results. What has been missing in the current process? Evaluating outcomes using a racial equity lens. Explicitly evaluating performance across racial lines will inform how governments design and deliver services. Identifying those that benefit from services or using racially informed geographic boundaries to see where governments distribute benefits holds the budget accountable for its results.

The State should build on, and expand the analysis for, three key entities already in place, and add one additional function during the legislative process:

- **Budgeting for Results Commission:** The Commission, with support from the BFR Unit of the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget (GOMB), can modify or develop performance metrics to guide funding to services that address disparate racial outcomes. A roadmap for technical assistance to disaggregate outcomes by race can guide the Commission and the Governor’s Office to build this analysis for agencies.
- **Governor’s Office of Equity:** The Office can co-create performance indicators with all departments using the learnings from the Illinois Towards Equity Framework. These indicators could guide investment choices and program design at the department level with rationale for the General Assembly to consider during the budget process.
- **Commission on Equity & Inclusion (CEI):** Capacity issues plague a lot of high-demand services impacting the state generally, and Black Communities specifically. The Commission can create performance indicators to address existing service gaps facing Black communities, future service needs, and create capacity building initiatives to address service disparities.
- **Racial Equity Note.** Evaluating racial equity impacts is often done in the political process without a nonpartisan analysis. HB 1223 would allow for the development of a racial equity impact note on legislation at the request of a member. This allows the state to formally evaluate potential racial impacts of pending bills. Just like a fiscal note estimates costs, savings, revenue gain, or revenue loss that may result from implementation of a bill or joint resolution, a racial equity note would estimate impacts on different communities across the state for proposed bills.

BUDGET PRIORITIES – FOUR POLICY PILLARS

In difficult budget years, it is important to protect and even expand funding in areas that have the greatest impact and scale back on less effective spending. IBAI helped identify evidence-based priorities to assist the General Assembly in highlighting public service areas that have research-informed effects that disproportionately impact Black Illinois residents.

The priorities are grounded in the Illinois Black Caucus (ILBC) Policy Pillars released in 2021. IBAI added corresponding Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Two additional non-SDOH recommendations were made under the Criminal Justice Reform Pillar to address some Illinois-specific challenges not reflected in the Federal SDOH objectives.

Pillar 1: Criminal Justice Reform

The criminal justice reform pillar was written to increase public safety for everyone while dismantling the systems that hold Black people back from achieving their full potential, as well as increasing trust between law enforcement and the Black community.

- Community Violence Intervention Funding
- Justice Diversion Programs Funding
- Funded Advocacy & Independent Representation (FAIR) Act (Non-SDOH recommendation)
- Reentry Housing and Services (Non-SDOH recommendation)

Pillar 2: Education and Workforce Development

The education and workforce development pillar is meant to dismantle systemic racism within Illinois' education system – from early childhood through adult learning. It expands access to Early Childhood Intervention services, creates a uniform kindergarten readiness assessment, matches high school graduation requirements with basic entrance requirements at Illinois' flagship public university, creates commissions to address how schools teach the history of marginalized groups and address students who have experienced trauma, strengthens university programs meant to help get more minority teachers in the classroom, and more.

- Early Childhood Funding
- K-12 Evidence-based Funding
- Adequate and Equitable University Funding Act Funding
- Workforce Development and Youth Jobs Funding

Pillar 3: Economic Access, Equity and Opportunity

The economic opportunity pillar is designed to eliminate the Black community's barriers to economic access, equity, and opportunity. The legislation addresses banking and investment, economic mobility, small business and entrepreneurship, state procurement and the Business Enterprise Program, industry-specific equity, environmental equity, housing and land use, pay equity and workers' rights, and capital investments.

- Housing Funding
- Food Access Funding
- Mass Transit Funding

Pillar 4: Health Care and Human Services

The health care and human services pillar is primarily focused on creating a more equitable and inclusive health care system in Illinois. It would put a temporary halt to hospital closures, reform Medicaid managed care organizations, take steps to reduce maternal and infant mortality, improve access to mental health care and substance abuse treatment, and train medical providers to recognize and overcome implicit bias.

- Healthcare Funding
- HIV/AIDS Prevention Funding
- Maternal and Reproductive Health Funding
- Mental Health Services Funding

CONCLUSION

During a challenging budget year, we find it necessary to learn from the investment impacts of COVID funding and the impact of investment to address community needs. We discussed budget priorities with community organizations, conducted research and selected budget priorities based on evidence-based practices identified by the US Department of Health and Humans Services.

We also find it necessary to address State processes that can help all communities serve their residents with adequacy. With the attacks on performance data and evidence-based program development at the federal level, the State of Illinois owes its residents the ability to evaluate our needs and to guide public investment to address them.