Affordable and stable housing is a critical need. There are more than 100 Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in Illinois, yet thousands of families are not able to access public housing. Currently, each PHAs sets their own — and often widely differing — admissions criteria and enforce different rules and regulations for granting housing to people with criminal records. Lack of access to housing for people with records increases the risk of homelessness and recidivism.

The Public Housing Access Bill (SB1980 HFA2) creates standards for Illinois Public Housing Authorities to use in the criminal background screening process. SB1980 HFA2 improves equity and access to public housing and decreases recidivism by ensuring that every PHA has a criminal background screening process that includes:

► No wait period after being released from incarceration;
► A lookback period of 6 months from the date of application;
► Limits PHAs from considering records that did not lead to a finding of guilt, expunged or sealed records, or juvenile records;
► Requires every person that falls within the lookback period must have an opportunity to present their mitigating circumstances before denial due to criminal background;
► Requires that each PHA keep records on the number of people who were in the criminal legal system who apply for public housing; and
► Establishes an internal reviewer to examine criminal history reports, identify eligible offenses for consideration, and share only the relevant records with the public housing authority decision-makers.

2 Under federal guidelines, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that local PHAs ban people on the sex offender registry and people who have been convicted of manufacturing methamphetamines on public housing property. These are the only lifetime bans designated by HUD.
FOR MORE INFORMATION

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This legislation is supported by the
RESTORING RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES COALITION OF ILLINOIS (RROCI),
a coalition of directly impacted community leaders, organizers, and policy advocates from:

The Public Housing Access Bill is Supported by: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation
Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice • Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance • Chicago Community Bond Fund
Chicago Jobs Council • Chicago Urban League • Heartland Alliance • Housing Action Illinois
Illinois Justice Project • Illinois Voice for Reform • John Howard Association
Law Enforcement Action Partnership • Legal Council for Health Justice • LifeSpan •
Renaissance Social Services, Inc. • Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Supportive Housing Providers Association • Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities
Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois • Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois
Woodstock Institute