



# HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT

Addressing the Human Service Workforce Crisis

FACT SHEET | 2022

## Program Background & Facts

Illinois Human Service providers are facing a workforce crisis that is directly impacting the clients we serve. Individuals and families may go without care, experience long waiting lists, or linger in traumatizing situations without support. Our sector is collectively experiencing record levels of vacancies, turnovers, and growing wage gaps, all of which have been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Illinois must strengthen programs to help build and maintain a strong workforce for the health and human services sector. Positions in the human service sector, which often pay just above the minimum wage, usually require bachelor's and master's degrees with corresponding student debt for those who dedicate themselves to this work. A Human Service Professional Loan Repayment program will help to recruit and retain new entrants to the workforce.

- ⇒ According to a survey conducted by the Illinois Partners for Human service<sup>1</sup>, most organizations experienced their highest turnover at the onset of the pandemic. More than half of survey respondents experienced higher vacancies during the study period than their pre-pandemic baseline.
  - 25% reported double or more vacancies.
  - Lack of applicants and lower wages were the most common hiring barriers.
  - Over 75% of human service employees identify as female.
  - Almost half of the workforce identify as either Black/African American (30.8%) or Hispanic/Latina/o/x (16.3%).
- ⇒ Emergency COVID-19 funding, while helpful, is not sustainable and does little to address growing workforce issues.



## Solution

The General Assembly should **establish a loan repayment program for human service professionals** to incentivize students to elect human services as a career choice. Stabilizing the workforce will directly help the individuals, families, and communities served by community-based human service providers.



### CALL TO ACTION

Support **SB3925/HB4720** which would create the Human Service Professional Loan Repayment program.

<sup>1</sup> Illinois Partners for Human Service. (2021). [More Essential than Ever: Rebuilding the Illinois Health and Human Services Workforce in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

<sup>2</sup> Illinois Collaboration on Youth. (2020). *2020 Survey of Illinois' Community-Based Child Welfare Organizations*.

<sup>3</sup> Social Work Today. (2019). [Helping Social Workers Manage Student Loan Debt](#).



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