



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB4970

by Rep. Nicolle Grasse

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

20 ILCS 2310/2310-726 new

Amends the Department of Public Health Powers and Duties Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Establishes the Office for Community Belonging and Connection in the Department of Public Health for certain purposes and with specified duties. Requires the Office to establish a 3-year pilot program to collect data on the epidemic of loneliness. Requires each State agency that coordinates with the Office to designate a Community Belonging Liaison to represent the agency in an interagency group. Describes the duties of the interagency group. Grants rulemaking powers to the Department. Effective January 1, 2027.

LRB104 20203 BDA 33654 b

1 AN ACT concerning State government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. References to Act. This Act may be referred to
5 as the Community Belonging and Connection Act.

6 Section 5. The Department of Public Health Powers and
7 Duties Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois is
8 amended by adding Section 2310-726 as follows:

9 (20 ILCS 2310/2310-726 new)

10 Sec. 2310-726. Office for Community Belonging and
11 Connection.

12 (a) In this Section, "epidemic of loneliness" means a
13 public health crisis that is characterized by widespread
14 social disconnection and insufficient relationships and that
15 was declared an epidemic by the U.S. Surgeon General in 2023
16 due to its scale and serious health risks, including, without
17 limitation, risks of heart disease, dementia, depression,
18 anxiety, and premature death.

19 (b) For the purpose of addressing the epidemic of
20 loneliness, the Office for Community Belonging and Connection
21 is established in the Department. Requirements for officers
22 and staff and other requirements for the Office for Community

1 Belonging and Connection shall be established by rule adopted
2 by the Department, consistent with the provisions of this
3 Section.

4 (c) The Office for Community Belonging and Connection
5 shall, at a minimum:

6 (1) develop and implement evidence-informed
7 initiatives that strengthen community belonging and reduce
8 social isolation;

9 (2) coordinate interagency efforts across State
10 agencies in the fields of health, aging, transportation,
11 housing, education, veterans, and human services;

12 (3) administer Community Belonging and Connection
13 Grants, subject to appropriation, to local entities
14 demonstrating measurable outcomes; and

15 (4) submit an annual public report to the General
16 Assembly detailing actions taken and outcomes achieved, as
17 well as including data and analysis regarding:

18 (A) the economic impact of loneliness within
19 communities and for local businesses in the State; and

20 (B) the correlation between community well-being
21 and the prevalence of crime in communities in the
22 State.

23 (d) The Office for Community Belonging and Connection
24 shall establish a 3-year pilot program in 3 regions in the
25 State representing rural, suburban, and urban communities. The
26 pilot program shall collect data on the epidemic of loneliness

1 and initiatives intended to address the epidemic of
2 loneliness. This data shall include, without limitation, data
3 on participation, reported loneliness, health outcomes, and
4 civic engagement. The pilot program may implement initiatives
5 intended to address the epidemic of loneliness. The results of
6 the pilot program shall be used to inform recommendations
7 regarding continuation, expansion, or modification of the
8 pilot program and may be used for any other purpose under this
9 Section. The Department, in consultation with the Office for
10 Community Belonging and Connection, shall adopt rules
11 implementing the pilot program under this subsection (d).

12 (e) Each State agency that coordinates with the Office for
13 Community Belonging and Connection under paragraph (2) of
14 subsection (c) or for any other purpose under this Section
15 shall designate a Community Belonging Liaison to represent the
16 State agency in an interagency group established in the Office
17 for Community Belonging and Connection. The Community
18 Belonging Liaisons from State agencies shall meet quarterly as
19 an interagency group to coordinate implementation of any
20 provision under this Section or rules adopted under this
21 Section, as well as to share best practices regarding
22 addressing the epidemic of loneliness in the State. This
23 interagency group shall submit an annual report to the General
24 Assembly detailing expenditures, programs, and outcomes for
25 each participating State agency. The interagency group, in
26 consultation with the Office for Community Belonging and

1 Connection, shall establish and publicly publish annual
2 benchmarks for State government regarding the purposes under
3 this Section. If an annual benchmark has not been met, as
4 determined by the interagency group, the interagency group
5 shall publicly publish a corrective action plan. The
6 Department, in consultation with the Office for Community
7 Belonging and Connection, the Department on Aging, the
8 Department of Transportation, the Illinois Housing Development
9 Authority, the Department of Natural Resources, the State
10 Board of Education, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and
11 the Department of Human Services, shall adopt rules
12 implementing this subsection (e).

13 (f) The Department may adopt any rules necessary to carry
14 out the purposes of this Section.

15 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January
16 1, 2027.