



HR1357

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives recognize that there are distressed counties  
4 and communities throughout Illinois that struggle with many  
5 economic and social problems including crime, unemployment,  
6 poverty, mortgage foreclosures, declining property values,  
7 deficiencies in public health services, and deficits in public  
8 education; and

9           WHEREAS, In recent years these economic and social problems  
10 have become more prevalent and they have exacerbated existing  
11 conditions which include: inequalities in access to justice in  
12 the civil court system, an overburdened and ineffective  
13 criminal justice system, overcrowded correctional facilities,  
14 increased homelessness, inadequate educational opportunities,  
15 insufficient affordable housing, inadequate delivery of social  
16 services to the less fortunate, and deficiencies in the  
17 availability and quality of public health services; and

18           WHEREAS, Some counties and communities disproportionately  
19 experience these serious social and economic ills; for example,  
20 Illinois counties which had 16% or more of their population in  
21 poverty in 2010 included: Alexander, Champaign, Coles, Cook,  
22 Franklin, Gallatin, Hardin, Jackson, Lawrence, McDonough,  
23 Macon, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pike, Pope, Pulaski, Saline,

1 Union, Vermilion, White, Williamson, and Winnebago; and  
2 municipalities with a population of over 100,000 which had  
3 family poverty rates of 10% or more are: Aurora, Chicago,  
4 Joliet, Naperville, Peoria, Rockford, and Springfield; and

5 WHEREAS, It is important to take a comprehensive approach  
6 to the ongoing crisis of distressed counties and communities in  
7 Illinois and a significant poverty rate is among the best  
8 indicators that a community is in distress; and

9 WHEREAS, Care must be taken when addressing poverty and its  
10 associated problems in counties with distressed communities  
11 because an emphasis on serving the largest number of people in  
12 poverty will miss other areas of the State with significant  
13 poverty problems and an emphasis on areas with the highest  
14 rates of poverty will ignore large populations in need, as  
15 shown by these facts:

16 (1) Cook County has the highest number of persons  
17 living in poverty (which amounts to nearly 50% of the State's  
18 poverty population), but DuPage County (which has historically  
19 been considered to be a wealthy county with a small low-income  
20 population) has the second-highest number of persons in  
21 poverty;

22 (2) the 10 poorest counties in Illinois, as measured by  
23 poverty rate, are generally downstate with small total  
24 populations and while their poverty rates are very high (the

1 highest county rate is 31.1%, with an average for all 10 of the  
2 poorest counties of 21.6%), these counties collectively  
3 account for less than 10% of the State's total poverty  
4 population;

5 (3) the 10 counties with the highest numbers of persons  
6 in poverty are, for the most part, near urban centers with 5 in  
7 the Chicago metropolitan area and these 10 counties include  
8 over 70% of the State's poverty population;

9 (4) a Statewide emphasis on the top 10 counties with  
10 high poverty rates will ignore the needs of 94% of the State's  
11 poverty population, but an emphasis on the 10 counties with the  
12 highest numbers of people in poverty will deemphasize the  
13 counties with the highest poverty rates; and

14 WHEREAS, The U.S. Census Bureau on September 12, 2012,  
15 announced that, in 2011:

16 (1) the median household income in the United States  
17 declined by 1.5% from the 2010 median, which was the second  
18 consecutive annual drop;

19 (2) the weighted average poverty threshold for a family  
20 of four in 2011 was \$23,021;

21 (3) the nation's official poverty rate was 15.0  
22 percent, with 46.2 million people in poverty;

23 (4) and although the poverty rate and number of people  
24 remained statistically unchanged since 2010, this is the fourth  
25 year in a row with such significant amounts of poverty in this

1 country; and

2 WHEREAS, The poverty rate in Illinois was 14.2% in 2011 and  
3 this amounts to a 42% increase in the poverty rate in Illinois  
4 from 2007 to 2011; and

5 WHEREAS, Living in an area with a high poverty rate may  
6 include threats to life itself; for example, a recent  
7 comparison of 2 sets of Chicago neighborhoods, the 5 poorest  
8 and the 5 least poor, showed that:

9 (1) the poorest neighborhoods had a homicide rate that  
10 is 11 times the homicide rate in the least poor neighborhoods;

11 (2) the mortality rate for the leading causes of death  
12 in Chicago (cancer, heart disease, diabetes-related illnesses,  
13 stroke, and unintentional injury) is 5 times higher in the 5  
14 poorest neighborhoods than it is in the 5 least poor  
15 neighborhoods;

16 (3) the infant mortality rate is 2 1/2 times higher in  
17 the poorest neighborhoods than in the 5 least poor  
18 neighborhoods; and

19 (4) that the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) due to  
20 homicide in the 5 poorest neighborhoods was 2,172 for every  
21 100,000 residents (assuming a life expectancy of 75 years)  
22 compared to the YPLL homicide rate of only 186 in the 5 least  
23 poor neighborhoods (the concept of Years of Potential Life Lost  
24 is an estimate of the average years a person would have lived

1 if he or she had not died prematurely); and

2 WHEREAS, So long as these social and economic problems are  
3 not successfully addressed in distressed counties and  
4 communities, the cost to tax payers in Illinois for the many  
5 programs operated or funded by the State will only increase;  
6 and

7 WHEREAS, State government resources are expended in  
8 ever-increasing amounts to address these social and economic  
9 problems and those expenditures are a significant drain on the  
10 State's road to financial stability; and

11 WHEREAS, There exist numerous ways for State government  
12 programs to be operated more efficiently and more economically;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, State government, taxpayers, and those living in  
15 distressed counties and communities with a significant poverty  
16 problem could benefit from the creation of a State action plan  
17 that identifies: modifications that should be made to existing  
18 State programs so as to dramatically improve the delivery of  
19 services, reduce the cost of those services, and eliminate  
20 wasteful spending; how leadership programs and new educational  
21 opportunities could foster and equip new leaders; and ways in  
22 which State government could actively create a change

1 environment that will have numerous positive impacts; and

2 WHEREAS, If more effective, efficient, and economical ways  
3 to deliver social, law enforcement, correctional, educational,  
4 and medical programs can be developed, then significant strides  
5 can be made in the overall welfare of the distressed counties  
6 and communities and those solutions could be replicated, with  
7 adjustments as appropriate, to all communities in Illinois;  
8 therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
10 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
11 we urge the Governor to create a Distressed Counties and  
12 Communities Commission composed of stake holders in distressed  
13 counties and communities, representatives of appropriate State  
14 agencies, and community leaders to explore, discuss, and  
15 coordinate efforts to prepare an action plan to offer enhanced  
16 State governmental services in a meaningful way, to foster  
17 leadership, and to create programs that can succeed in  
18 addressing the myriad social and economic problems that exist;  
19 this, in turn, can benefit all Illinois communities; and be it  
20 further;

21 RESOLVED, That we urge that the Governor designate an  
22 executive department to provide administrative support for the  
23 Commission and appoint members of the Distressed Counties and

1 Communities Commission by December 31, 2013, so as to allow the  
2 Distressed Counties and Communities Commission to hold its  
3 first meeting in January 2013, and be it further

4       RESOLVED, That the Distressed Counties and Communities  
5 Commission be charged with: finding and creating innovative  
6 means to address and meet the numerous needs of those who  
7 receive State social services; designing plans to assist and  
8 enhance the efforts of State agencies and local governments  
9 that provide law enforcement and social services; analyzing  
10 successful state and local governmental programs in other  
11 locales in the subject areas of law enforcement, court  
12 administration, corrections, job skill retraining, education,  
13 economic opportunity, job creation, social services, and  
14 public health; and developing an action plan that includes  
15 information about changes and improvements to existing  
16 programs, statutes, and regulations that can be made by  
17 reallocating existing resources and not increasing State  
18 taxes; and be it further;

19       RESOLVED, That we urge the Governor to call upon the  
20 Distressed Counties and Communities Commission to hold public  
21 hearings and issue a written report of its findings and  
22 recommendations to the Governor and to the General Assembly on  
23 or before April 15, 2013; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
2 delivered to the Governor.