



Jewish United Fund  

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TOGETHER *for* GOOD

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRES  
ILLINOIS HOUSE DISTRICT 12  
Election Day: March 17, 2026

In December 2025 and January 2026, JUF met with candidates for IL House 12. JUF invited all known candidates with available contact information to complete a questionnaire and to participate in an introductory meeting with JUF. The questionnaire was sent to every candidate who agreed to meet. **Responses included in this guide are presented exactly as submitted, without edits or alterations.** If you do not see a candidate's questionnaire, they either didn't accept JUF's invitation to schedule a meeting or didn't submit a completed questionnaire.

We hope these questionnaires are valuable resources. JUF does not rate, endorse, or contribute to candidates for elective office.

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# Paul Kendrick

## Early Childhood

**Nonprofit childcare providers are facing unique challenges as public school-based early childhood programs proliferate in the state. Do you have recommendations regarding public-private partnership opportunities or state funding that will ensure infants and non infants receive care?**

The state has an important role in play in the career pipeline for these providers in subsidizing people going into the field, so we have the staff needed. I would plan to support tax incentive programs to help these nonprofit childcare providers persist because they are important as options for parents. While keeping safety paramount, it is worth looking at well-intentioned regulations that are not needed and making it more financially difficult for these providers to stay open.

**Do you support the recommendations contained in IL House Resolution 137 that calls for state dollars to support infrastructure needs of community-based early care and education providers? Do you have suggestions to achieve the recommendations contained in HR137?**

Yes. Implementing the new Department of Early Childhood is an opportunity to move these components forward, and I would prioritize advancing them. Ultimately, we can't get more children into quality early education programs if there is not physical infrastructure for them, so we need to support these centers with what are sometimes challenging capital costs so they can be there for years to come.

**A common challenge with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is that income eligibility to participate is standard across the state. Do you support a higher CCAP income eligibility threshold based on geographic cost of living differences? (e.g., Chicago compared to Peoria).**

Yes. This makes plenty of sense given the disparities in local economics.

## Israel

**Do you support maintaining the current Illinois anti-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement) law that prevents state pension dollars from being invested in foreign companies that engage in actions that are "politically motivated and are intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with the State of Israel or companies based in the State of Israel or in territories controlled by the State of Israel"?**

Yes. The BDS movement is afflicted with prejudice towards the world's sole Jewish state and I will defend the current law to protect us from anti-Semitism.

**Do you support the continued ability of the Illinois State Treasurer to invest in bonds issued by the State of Israel, which has been permitted in Illinois since 1997?**

Yes. Israel should not be treated differently from any other country in any kind of discriminatory way.

## Older Adults

**Illinois' aging population continues to grow, however there are not enough state resources available to support older adults who wish to remain in their homes to age in place. Do you have ideas for state-level policies that would support older adults' ability to remain in their homes?**

I support funding the Community Care program, which many seniors like as a way to stay at home. Legalizing accessory dwelling units statewide create more spaces for seniors to live outside of group homes. I would support more targeted tax credits for home modifications for seniors' mobility, more incentives for building affordable senior apartments, further relieving the property tax burden on seniors, and programs that provide meals and transportation to them.

## Security

**The Illinois Not-for-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP-IL) administered by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency-Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) received state budget appropriations of \$20 million in SFY23, \$18 million in SFY24, \$8 million in SFY25, and \$7.5 million in SFY26. The program provides security funding support to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and houses of worship that demonstrate they are at risk of violent extremist attacks. Do you support increasing the appropriation for this program in future fiscal years?**

Yes, this is important given the rise in anti-Semitic threats on Jewish institutions.

## **Antisemitism**

**Antisemitism is surging across the United States. What will you do as a member of the IL General Assembly to help combat antisemitism in our communities, schools, and institutions of higher education?**

I would be a consistent voice speaking out against it and introducing legislation when it can make a difference. For instance, during a talk my friend, CPS School Board member Ellen Rosenfeld, recently gave at Sinai that I attended, she discussed an offensive billboard posted at a CPS school and how important it was for parents to speak out and for a leader like her to get involved. I will be that leader that you and people in the community can turn to for using my voice when needed. As a father of Jewish daughters this is important to me and I would love to join the legislative Jewish caucus if that is acceptable from someone who is not Jewish but has family who is and a district with such a large and vibrant Jewish community.

## **Health & Human Services**

**The state of Illinois relies on numerous nonprofit social service agencies, to provide health and behavioral health support services to some of our state's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid reimbursement rates have lagged inflation and state human services contracts do not include a yearly cost of living increase. What would you do to help alleviate the funding and workforce challenges for nonprofits that are serving low-income populations?**

I want to break down silos between social service and health programs so that people get enrolled in everything they need much more easily. This matters because we are facing massive Medicaid cuts from BBB based on trying to trip people up on paperwork, so let's reduce it. I believe in parity with human and health services which often means bringing up reimbursement rates in areas like mental health. I will support yearly cost of living increases as a baseline but will push beyond that for more funding to nonprofits serving low-income populations overall.

**What would you do to decrease the state's reliance on State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) and increase availability of community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities?**

I would start by listening to those community-based residential options for what they need. From there, I would look at how we move funds to community-based residential programs which are more popular with families who need them. As someone who served in the federal government, I'll be best equipped to us access anything we can. I want to incentive and fund these community-based options being available.

**While the IL General Assembly has taken a number of proactive steps to promote gun safety and reduce gun violence, what additional measures do you think should be pursued by the General Assembly?**

I've talked to my friend Rep. Bob Morgan on how we can take on gun manufacturers and the networks that traffic them into Chicago. I'm eager to do this.

**How do you propose that Illinois balance the SFY 2027 state budget considering inflationary concerns, the projected \$2.1 billion state deficit, H.R. 1 implications, and other federal cuts?**

I believe there are revenue options around tax loopholes, billionaires, and digital media we can pursue. Ultimately, we also need to grow in Chicago for future years of these deficits that we can't tax our way out of, we need a better business climate to allow our companies to grow and then pay more. I support amending our state constitution to allow progressive levels of taxation, so our state legislature can adjust income tax rates to ensure wealthy residents pay their fair share without increasing the burden on our lowest-income residents. In general, I support closing loopholes that allow corporations and the ultra-wealthy to avoid

paying their fair share.

**With hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans, including lawfully present refugees, expected to lose Medicaid and SNAP, what can the state do to mitigate the worst of these harms?**

I organized a food drive called SNAPping back in Lincoln Park a few weeks ago, so I know how important this is. The state should continue giving to food banks and I will partner with them on what they need.

## **Refugee Services**

**What additional measures do you suggest the ILGA take to protect the rights of refugees and other immigrants in the State?**

I will also work closely with ICIRR and other immigrant rights organizations on how we can keep pushing for legal accountability for ICE building off the recent SALT Act and ways to protect people in Chicago. I was proud to organize a recent Community Defense Workshop with Ald. Andre Vasquez and Cat Sharp will continue to be leaders in my community in defending refugees and immigrants.

## **Candidate Priorities**

**What are some of the key priorities you would like to pursue in the IL General Assembly?**

### **Public Safety**

Every family deserves to feel safe in their home, on their block, and in their city. My plan includes:

- Stopping chronic retail theft. People continue being hurt and worse in incidents of retail theft. We cannot continue a revolving door approach that leads to unsafe neighborhoods and closing stores and products behind glass. I will pass legislation to make multiple retail thefts escalate to a felony so that a record gives a more accurate view of threat to the public a defendant poses.
- The Chicago Police Department is down 2,000 officers. We must incentive partnerships and improved recruitment strategies that fill them
- Getting the technology and training we need
- Evidence-based violence interventions
- Taking on gun manufacturers and those trafficking guns into Chicago.

### **Protecting Illinois and Our Fundamental Rights**

We must protect our fundamental rights from attacks by the Federal Government. That means safeguarding health care, including reproductive and LGBTQ+ and all data privacy. We need to expand access to reproductive care, knowing the demand coming from other states. ICE's profiling and cruelty are unacceptable, so I will be dogged in every way we can protect our neighbors.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

I will stand up for fiscal responsibility in this state. Illinois cannot squeeze every last dollar residents. We must grow, make effective investments, and live within our means so our children can shape our state's future.

### **Education**

I am dedicated to ensuring high-quality schools where students, parents, and teachers have the right resources they need to be successful. I will focus on driving educational outcomes by leveraging the state's education funding to address key needs such as special education, social-emotional behavioral support, and improving instructional excellence through effective teacher training and support.

### **Transit & Infrastructure**

Chicago needs fast, reliable transit. I work to effectively implement the Northern Illinois Regional Transit Authority to prioritize real reform with experts in place to help us achieve the system our world-class city needs.

#### Costs

Between property taxes, groceries, health and child care, and so many costs today, it's become too hard to afford daily needs. I will pursue every avenue to bring costs down.

#### Growing Small Businesses

We must improve the business climate in Illinois so businesses can open, grow, and create opportunity. The small businesses of the 12th district are vital to what we love about our neighborhoods and we don't want to see storefront vacancies. We need companies choosing Chicago and our homegrown ones able to add to their payroll to create opportunities for our residents.

#### Health Care

Illinois is set to lose an estimated \$48B in Medicaid funds over the next decade. I will work to keep our hospitals open and patients getting the care they need.

#### **Any additional information you would like to share with us?**

I am a neighborhood leader driven by serving communities – from the Obama Administration to Hope Chicago most recently, supporting thousands of low-income students on a path to college and trades.

Previously, I led Rust Belt Rising, training Midwest Democratic candidates to connect with working families on bread-and-butter economic issues and organize to win. At Rising, I trained hundreds of candidates and mobilized state and county parties across the region, as well as hundreds of volunteers, to register thousands of Midwest voters.

I served on the 2012 Obama campaign, organizing the Wisconsin youth vote and on the 2018 Pritzker for Governor campaign. After the Obama campaign, I served in his White House, recruiting and vetting talent for the administration. My deep community involvement includes volunteering my educational background to the Lincoln Park High School Local School Council, as well as serving on the board of the Park West Neighbors Association.

For the past eight years, I have organized the Indivisible chapter of Lakeview, Lincoln Park, and Old Town, engaging neighbors to impact national and local issues, such as protecting health and reproductive care.

# Litcy Kurisinkal

## Early Childhood

**Nonprofit childcare providers are facing unique challenges as public school-based early childhood programs proliferate in the state. Do you have recommendations regarding public-private partnership opportunities or state funding that will ensure infants and non infants receive care?**

Illinois has a shortage of early childcare programs based on the population of 3-5 year olds in the state. While there are approximately 65,000 children aged eligible preschool population of 3 & 4yrs olds living in Chicago alone, as of May 2025, CPS has enrolled only over 19,000 Pre-K students in its early-learning programs. Even with CPS's significant expansion, publicly run pre-K in Chicago is reaching only a marginal, approximately 25-35% of preschool age children. Most children remain in non-public childcare or no formal care.

While I strongly believe in investing our tax dollars in public education, I recognize the gaps in early childhood education. Therefore, I support a mixed delivery system of community-based centers, subsidies, infant/toddler care that will ensure access, flexibility and cultural responsiveness for families. In order to ensure childcare access to all our children, we need to provide state support for public-private partnerships.

We need to invest in workforce development, re-evaluate CCAP reimbursement reflecting geographical realities and strengthen partnerships between public school programs and community-based centers to share spaces, curriculum resources, coordinate enrollment, transportation, and special education services. We should facilitate grants to support infrastructure and operational maintenance primarily prioritizing public school programs and extending it to

served communities.

**Do you support the recommendations contained in IL House Resolution 137 that calls for state dollars to support infrastructure needs of community-based early care and education providers? Do you have suggestions to achieve the recommendations contained in HR137?**

I advocate for investing tax dollars in public education and services. At the same time, I recognize the huge gap in early childhood education in Illinois, whereby, a public-private partnership is a necessity, which the HR 137 addresses.

I support the goals of House Resolution 137, which recognizes that Illinois' early childhood system requires a strong mixed-delivery model, which includes community-based childcare centers, home-based providers, and public-school programs. HR137 correctly identifies that the facilities and capital needs are major barriers preventing high-quality early education access to families, particularly infants and toddlers, who are currently served outside of public schools. I support conducting a statewide assessment of early childhood facility needs. Based on the assessment, Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) program should be implemented to support institutions to modernize, expand, and remain stable by prioritizing public school childcare centers first and then the community providers on a need-to-need basis, especially in under-served neighborhoods and high need areas. I believe that strengthening community-based infrastructure will facilitates and ensure access and equity for working families who rely on care.

**A common challenge with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is that income eligibility to participate is standard across the state. Do you support a higher CCAP income eligibility threshold based on geographic cost of living differences? (e.g., Chicago compared to Peoria).**

Yes. I support adjusting CCAP income eligibility to better reflect geographic cost-of-living differences across Illinois. A uniform statewide threshold does not account for family expenses such as higher costs of housing, transportation, and childcare in regions like Chicago and Cook County compared to other parts of the state. Families with the same income can face very different economic realities depending on where they live. Allowing for regional eligibility adjustments or a cost-of-living index would make CCAP more equitable, reduce benefit cliffs for working families, and help stabilize the childcare workforce by ensuring providers in higher-cost areas can continue serving families who need care. Any changes should be implemented carefully to maintain fiscal sustainability and administrative clarity while prioritizing access for families most at risk of losing care

## Israel

**Do you support maintaining the current Illinois anti-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement) law that prevents state pension dollars from being invested in foreign companies that engage in actions that are “politically motivated and are intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with the State of Israel or companies based in the State of Israel or in territories controlled by the State of Israel”?**

No. I recognize the intent behind the Illinois’ anti-BDS law, which may have been created to protect Israel and Jewish communities from perceived discriminatory economic targeting. However, BDS was initiated by a group of civic society organizations unlike the Arab League boycott in the 1940s, which was a regional state action that was exclusionary. Objectively, by enacting Anti-BDS law, Illinois has taken a state legislative action against a civic society initiative, which did not have its origin within Illinois or US. Such a legislative rationale raises the inherent question whether Illinois should take legislative state action against the plethora of civic society initiatives addressed against various nations highlighting diverse concerns. My sense is that we may not have the administrative capacity to address foreign policy and international issues initiated by civic societies considering Illinois has a plethora of domestic issues within our state including children going hungry and the state not having met basic education standards for our children. In addition, the anti-BDS law has an exclusionary effect to limit dialogue on human rights concerns, and protection of civilians in conflict zones specifically in the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. As a candidate aspiring to represent our 12th district in the Illinois General Assembly, I do not support a state action against civic society initiatives until and unless we have robust guidelines and framework to address global issues and initiatives equitably.

All investment decisions are best made by financial experts who balance fiduciary responsibility, risk, and ethical considerations. Illinois should uphold the law’s purpose while ensuring that public funds are managed responsibly, ethically, and in a way that reflects our state’s values and commitment to human rights. The cardinal principle of any Illinois legislation on investment should be focused on how we can enhance the quality life standards of our people in the state of Illinois.

**Do you support the continued ability of the Illinois State Treasurer to invest in bonds issued by the State of Israel, which has been permitted in Illinois since 1997?**

Illinois State Treasurer has the responsibility to make data driven decisions to invest in any bonds that would benefit people of Illinois. All state investment decisions should be guided by professional financial expertise, fiduciary responsibility, and consideration of ethical and human-rights standards. The cardinal principle of any investment should be focused on how we can make safe and fiscally responsible decisions that will enhance the quality standards of our people in the state of Illinois.

In order to explore decisions on divestments, Illinois must develop a robust framework and guidelines that could be generalized to all relevant countries and situations. While I acknowledge the gross human rights violations and massacres in Gaza, there have been atrocities across the world including African & Asian countries where civil wars have been raging for decades by autocratic regimes committing genocide, massacres and gross violations. If we are taking the divestment route to fight violations, there has to be a clearly defined framework that acknowledges and is inclusive of all violations against humanity. For example, Chicago city treasurer is asking for boycotting US federal bonds. Such decisions will become overly subjective if we do not have clear guidelines on what should lead to such divestments.

## **Older Adults**

**Illinois’ aging population continues to grow, however there are not enough state resources available to support older adults who wish to remain in their homes to age in place. Do you have ideas for state-level policies that would support older adults’ ability to remain in their homes?**

All senior Illinoisans deserve to live a life of dignity during their aging days. Hence, we must create an environment that allows them to make independent choices to live in their homes and communities with access to the services and support they need. Access to healthcare and Medicare should be one of the top priorities when it comes to seniors. State-level policies should prioritize home and community-based services such as in-home care, meal delivery, and transportation, particularly for low-income and marginalized seniors. Funding for home modifications, caregiver supports, and technology to monitor health can help older adults remain independent while maintaining dignity. I support community partnerships and nonprofits, which are often trusted community hubs, to provide culturally responsive services, social connection, and support networks for older adults, ensuring no one is isolated or left without assistance.

## **Security**

**The Illinois Not-for-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP-IL) administered by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency-Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) received state budget appropriations of \$20 million in SFY23, \$18 million in SFY24, \$8 million in SFY25, and \$7.5 million in SFY26. The program provides security funding support to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and houses of worship that demonstrate they are at risk of violent extremist attacks. Do you support increasing the appropriation for this program in future fiscal years?**

It is extremely disturbing that our houses of worship face growing threats from violent extremist attacks. We need a broader security strategy to address such extremism. We need to strengthen our existing state and local police who have better information and coordinating capacity with the federal law enforcement agencies such as the FBI to address such attacks effectively. We should invest in equipping them with training and sensitivity to address religious extremism. Illinois state should also address the underlying root causes behind this extremism by investing in effective conflict resolution platforms, inter-faith dialogue, and trust building and healing mechanisms among communities with deep wounds.

## **Antisemitism**

**Antisemitism is surging across the United States. What will you do as a member of the IL General Assembly to help combat antisemitism in our communities, schools, and institutions of higher education?**

There is absolutely no place for antisemitism or any form of discrimination towards any population in our state or in this world. I have zero tolerance towards any discriminatory behavior towards any population, specifically children in educational institutions irrespective of their faith, ethnic origin, race, nationality, skin color, gender or any other. We need to create effective conflict resolution mechanisms to address all forms of discriminatory practices that exist in our state. We need to create inclusive platforms for dialogue to build trust among communities that have wounds towards each other. The concepts of Truth Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) in S.Africa, Chile are some good best practices, which we can lean on in our state to bring communities together and listen to each other's perspectives to rebuild trust and relationships. The easiest thing to do is to create division and spread hate. Even though it is difficult, I would like to work towards breaking echo chambers and creating platforms for dialogue, conflict resolution and conciliatory conversations. We need to coordinate more inter-faith events to teach our children and youth to understand and respect differences and co-exist peacefully.

## **Health & Human Services**

**The state of Illinois relies on numerous nonprofit social service agencies, to provide health and behavioral health support services to some of our state's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid reimbursement rates have lagged inflation and state human services contracts do not include a yearly cost of living increase. What would you do to help alleviate the funding and workforce challenges for nonprofits that are serving low-income populations?**

If we aspire to create an egalitarian society, we will need to increase and index Medicaid/contract reimbursement rates to inflation and labor market conditions. We need to require regular COLA adjustments in state contracts to keep pace with costs.

In order to support nonprofits to retain staff and sustain services, the state needs to invest in workforce development through tuition assistance, loan forgiveness for social workers, training grants. There needs to be efforts to reduce administrative burden by simplifying contracting and invoicing systems, which will bring more efficiency and reduce unnecessary costs.

**What would you do to decrease the state's reliance on State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) and increase availability of community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities?**

If we aspire to create an inclusive society, we will need to prioritize community-based residential development through competitive grants and transition planning for current SODC residents who want community options. Small group homes, supported apartments, and individualized housing plans would help them live in an integrated and inclusive community. We should encourage partnerships with nonprofits, local developers, and community organizations to create affordable, accessible housing.

Provide state grants or tax incentives for landlords or developers who make units accessible to individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities

**While the IL General Assembly has taken a number of proactive steps to promote gun safety and reduce gun** 9

## **violence, what additional measures do you think should be pursued by the General Assembly?**

**Universal Background Checks and Closing Loopholes:** Ensure all gun sales, including private and online transactions, require thorough background checks.

**Safe Storage and Red Flag Laws:** Promote laws that require secure firearm storage and strengthen implementation of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) to prevent at-risk individuals from accessing guns.

**Investment in Community-Based Violence Intervention:** Fund evidence-based programs such as hospital-based and street outreach initiatives, particularly in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by gun violence.

**Support for Mental Health and Social Services:** Expand access to mental health care, youth programming, and trauma-informed services to prevent cycles of violence.

**Data and Research:** Increase funding for firearm injury data collection and public health research to inform policies and track outcomes.

**Smart Gun Technology and Licensing :** Encourage innovation in gun safety technology and explore licensing or training requirements for firearm ownership.\*

## **How do you propose that Illinois balance the SFY 2027 state budget considering inflationary concerns, the projected \$2.1 billion state deficit, H.R. 1 implications, and other federal cuts?**

Illinois needs to focus on expanding our revenue streams and bringing efficiency to the programs where we spend our tax dollars. We need to prioritize and address structural deficits that threaten critical services such as public schools, transit, safety, and infrastructure maintenance that long-term consequences on our economy. To create stable revenue sources and balance the budget, I propose a combination of higher economic growth, fair taxation, responsible spending, and strategic investments. First, Expanding the state's revenue potential by promoting faster and sustained economic growth should be the primary fiscal strategy. Illinois needs to leverage its geographical location, to grow further as an industrial and logistical hub. There is also significant potential to attract technology and service business by leveraging the sizeable educated youth that come out of our universities, some of the best in the country. Illinois should consider incentives for fast growing industries such as data centers, where the state has attracted relatively fewer projects. Centered around Chicago, the largest city in the Midwest, the state can attract far more tourists, if promoted well and with the right infrastructure investments.

Second, we need to modernize and diversify our existing revenue sources. This includes ensuring high-income earners contribute their fair share, such as through legislation like the proposed millionaire tax, graduated income tax, closing corporate loopholes, bringing efficiency to our programs could all bring additional revenue.

Third, we need to make smart, outcome-focused investments in public safety, education, transit, and early intervention programs with transparency and accountability. Strengthening public schools and early childcare benefits families will reduce more expensive interventions later. I propose innovative financing tools like public-private partnerships and targeted impact bonds for social programs and infrastructure projects. These can make upfront investments for social programs, transit, parks, and public spaces without overburdening taxpayers until outcomes are met.

## **With hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans, including lawfully present refugees, expected to lose Medicaid and SNAP, what can the state do to mitigate the worst of these harms?**

It is quite tragic that hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans are at risk of losing Medicaid and SNAP. The state must act to prevent avoidable harm, particularly for refugees, seniors, children, and people with disabilities. We should expand state backup eligibility programs and emergency safety-net supports such as short-term rental, food assistance, community health clinics to reduce displacement and health harms. I support a multi-pronged approach that includes extending state-funded coverage where possible, streamlining renewals to reduce procedural disenrollment. We need to strengthen our community partnerships with nonprofit service providers that help families navigate eligibility and access care. Illinois should also proactively undertake outreach, language access, and legal assistance so that eligible individuals are not wrongly cut off. Finally, the state should leverage reserve funds and pursue federal waivers and flexibility to soften abrupt coverage losses, recognizing that preventing hunger and untreated illness ultimately reduces long-term state costs.

## **Refugee Services**

**What additional measures do you suggest the ILGA take to protect the rights of refugees and other immigrants in the State?**

Illinois has a strong tradition of welcoming refugees and immigrants, and the General Assembly should continue to protect their rights through practical, lawful measures. I support strengthening access to legal representation and know-your-rights education so immigrants can navigate complex systems and avoid wrongful detention or deportation. The state should also expand language access across agencies, ensure fair labor protections to prevent exploitation, and support community-based organizations that provide housing, healthcare navigation, and trauma-informed services for newcomers. Finally, Illinois

should continue to uphold due-process protections, limit unnecessary cooperation with federal enforcement that undermines trust, and ensure that lawfully present refugees and immigrants can access essential services that promote stability, self-sufficiency, and public safety

## **Candidate Priorities**

**What are some of the key priorities you would like to pursue in the IL General Assembly?**

As the only human rights activist, and woman in the race, I have clear policies to advocate for social justice. My campaign priorities are Public safety with a preventive approach using social impact bonds; improving public education by reducing local property taxes and centralizing funding to the state level; making home ownership and rentals affordable in our district that has 64% of renter occupied houses and modernizing public transit. I am a defender of religious unity, women's reproductive rights, affordable healthcare and immigrant rights.

# Karim Lakhani

## Early Childhood

**Nonprofit childcare providers are facing unique challenges as public school-based early childhood programs proliferate in the state. Do you have recommendations regarding public-private partnership opportunities or state funding that will ensure infants and non infants receive care?**

Illinois needs a strong early childhood ecosystem, and nonprofit childcare providers are essential to that. I support expanding public-private partnerships that help community-based centers stay financially stable, improve facilities, and maintain staffing. These centers often serve immigrant families, working parents, and children who need the most support. Specifically, I support: (1) Stable, multi-year operating grants so community-based providers are not forced to operate month to month or raise tuition on families; (2) State-funded facilities and quality-improvement grants to help providers meet licensing, safety, and educational standards without passing costs onto parents; and (3) Intentional coordination between school-based preschool programs and community childcare providers, so as public preschool expands, infants and toddlers continue to have access to high-quality, affordable care.

**Do you support the recommendations contained in IL House Resolution 137 that calls for state dollars to support infrastructure needs of community-based early care and education providers? Do you have suggestions to achieve the recommendations contained in HR137?**

Yes. I support HR137 and believe the state should invest directly in the infrastructure needs of community-based early childhood providers, including safety upgrades, accessibility, and classroom improvements.

To achieve the recommendations, I would suggest that Illinois: (1) expedite the award of remaining ECCG

funds and replenish resources on a recurring basis; (2) implement the biennial statewide assessment of infrastructure needs with transparent criteria that center underserved communities and community-based providers; and (3) provide targeted technical assistance to providers that lack facilities expertise.

**A common challenge with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is that income eligibility to participate is standard across the state. Do you support a higher CCAP income eligibility threshold based on geographic cost of living differences? (e.g., Chicago compared to Peoria).**

Yes. A family in Chicago or the suburbs faces very different housing and childcare costs than a family in a lower-cost region, and CCAP should reflect that reality. I support allowing higher CCAP income eligibility thresholds in high-cost areas, along with a more gradual phase-out of benefits, so working families are not punished with a steep benefits cliff the moment they earn a little more.

## Israel

**Do you support maintaining the current Illinois anti-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement) law that prevents state pension dollars from being invested in foreign companies that engage in actions that are “politically motivated and are intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with the State of Israel or companies based in the State of Israel or in territories controlled by the State of Israel”?**

I oppose efforts that seek to delegitimize Israel or deny its right to exist and defend itself, and I am deeply concerned about the ways antisemitism can surface in public discourse or political movements. The rise and platforming of these hateful words and actions must be called and stamped out. I believe strongly in Israel’s security, and I support a two-state solution as the best path to lasting peace that allows both Israelis and Palestinians to live in safety and dignity. I also want to better understand how Illinois’ current anti-BDS law is written and implemented, and meet with Jewish community leaders, legal experts, and stakeholders, including those who have experienced acts of antisemitism, to ensure the law is focused on bad-faith actors who seek to harm Israel and does not create unintended consequences. I approach this issue with humility and care, and I am committed to continued listening and learning.

**Do you support the continued ability of the Illinois State Treasurer to invest in bonds issued by the State of Israel, which has been permitted in Illinois since 1997?**

Yes. Bonds issued by the State of Israel have historically been a stable and reliable investment, and I support

preserving the Illinois State Treasurer's discretion to include them as part of a diversified portfolio when they meet the state's financial and risk standards.

## Older Adults

**Illinois' aging population continues to grow, however there are not enough state resources available to support older adults who wish to remain in their homes to age in place. Do you have ideas for state-level policies that would support older adults' ability to remain in their homes?**

Aging in place is about dignity, independence, and stability. We have a responsibility to help adults remain in the homes and communities they built their lives in, even as resources are stretched. Strategies to support aging in place include: (1) expanding home and community-based services such as in-home aides, meal delivery, and transportation, which are often more cost-effective than institutional care; (2) investing in home modification and repair programs that make homes safer, prevent falls, and reduce costly hospitalizations or nursing home placements; and (3) improving coordination between healthcare, housing, and social service providers so seniors can access support earlier, before a crisis forces them out of their homes.

## Security

**The Illinois Not-for-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP-IL) administered by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency-Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) received state budget appropriations of \$20 million in SFY23, \$18 million in SFY24, \$8 million in SFY25, and \$7.5 million in SFY26. The program provides security funding support to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and houses of worship that demonstrate they are at risk of violent extremist attacks. Do you support increasing the appropriation for this program in future fiscal years?**

Yes, I support increasing funding for the NSGP-IL program in future fiscal years. As threats targeting houses of worship and community institutions continue to rise, Illinois has a responsibility to help vulnerable institutions protect the people they serve. This program provides practical, preventative resources like security upgrades and safety planning, and restoring stronger funding levels is a matter of public safety, religious freedom, and community resilience.

## Antisemitism

**Antisemitism is surging across the United States. What will you do as a member of the IL General Assembly to help combat antisemitism in our communities, schools, and institutions of higher education?**

Antisemitism is real, rising, and deeply concerning. As a member of the Illinois General Assembly, I will support robust hate crime reporting and data transparency so we understand what communities are facing, back resources like security grants for institutions and houses of worship that are at risk, and will invest in education that addresses antisemitism, the Holocaust, and other forms of hate-based violence in schools and institutions of higher education. I also believe state leaders have a responsibility to speak out consistently against antisemitism and to work in partnership with community organizations and local leaders to ensure Jewish communities in Illinois feel safe, supported, and heard.

## Health & Human Services

**The state of Illinois relies on numerous nonprofit social service agencies, to provide health and behavioral health support services to some of our state's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid reimbursement rates have lagged inflation and state human services contracts do not include a yearly cost of living increase. What would you do to help alleviate the funding and workforce challenges for nonprofits that are serving low-income populations?**

Illinois relies on nonprofits for essential behavioral health and human services. I would work to: (1) increase Medicaid reimbursement rates and human services contracts so they keep pace with inflation and actual costs; (2) include regular cost-of-living adjustments in state contracts to stabilize nonprofit finances and stop constant staff turnover; and (3) invest in workforce supports, including fair wages, training, and loan repayment or retention incentives for frontline workers. I would also use my platform to push back against federal cuts to Medicaid and other safety-net programs that harm children, seniors, and working families, and work collaboratively across levels of government to protect these critical services.

**What would you do to decrease the state's reliance on State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) and**

**increase availability of community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities?**

Illinois should prioritize expanding safe, high-quality community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I would support increased funding for community providers, workforce investments to address staffing shortages, and streamlined approvals for new group homes and supported-living arrangements. At the same time, any transition away from SODCs must be individualized, voluntary, and driven by families and guardians, with oversight to ensure continuity and quality of care.

**While the IL General Assembly has taken a number of proactive steps to promote gun safety and reduce gun violence, what additional measures do you think should be pursued by the General Assembly?**

Illinois has made important progress on gun safety, including the passage of the assault weapons ban to limit access to the most dangerous weapons. Building on that, I support strengthening enforcement of

universal background checks, improving and clarifying extreme risk protection orders so warning signs are acted on sooner, and expanding safe storage requirements to prevent accidental harm and youth access. We should also continue investing in community violence prevention and mental health resources, because lasting safety requires both accountability and prevention.

**How do you propose that Illinois balance the SFY 2027 state budget considering inflationary concerns, the projected \$2.1 billion state deficit, H.R. 1 implications, and other federal cuts?**

Illinois should balance the SFY27 budget through a combination of disciplined spending, protecting core services, and fair revenue choices. That means prioritizing funding for education, healthcare, and public safety; avoiding across-the-board cuts that shift costs onto local governments; identifying efficiencies and consolidations where possible; and ensuring large, profitable corporations and high-wealth individuals pay their fair share. I also support contingency planning to mitigate federal cuts and fully funding obligations in a sustainable, responsible way.

**With hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans, including lawfully present refugees, expected to lose Medicaid and SNAP, what can the state do to mitigate the worst of these harms?**

The loss of Medicaid and SNAP for so many Illinoisans would be devastating, and the state has a responsibility to blunt that harm. I would support: targeted state-funded “bridge” coverage and food assistance for those who lose federal benefits; streamline enrollment so families do not fall through the cracks; and increased support for community providers like food pantries, clinics, and legal aid organizations that serve those most at risk.

## **Refugee Services**

**What additional measures do you suggest the ILGA take to protect the rights of refugees and other immigrants in the State?**

As the son of immigrants, I know how deeply policy decisions affect the safety, stability, and dignity of families. Illinois should continue to strengthen protections that ensure immigrants and refugees can live, work, and access services without fear. This includes upholding the Trust Act and due process protections, supporting legal defense and “Know Your Rights” education, protecting access to healthcare and education, and pushing back on federal overreach that targets people based on immigration status, religion, or national origin.

# Mac LeBuhn

## Early Childhood

**Nonprofit childcare providers are facing unique challenges as public school-based early childhood programs proliferate in the state. Do you have recommendations regarding public-private partnership opportunities or state funding that will ensure infants and non infants receive care?**

Illinois faces a critical challenge as we expand public preschool: ensuring that nonprofit childcare providers who serve infants and toddlers remain viable partners in our early childhood system. I support strengthening public-private partnerships through several mechanisms. Illinois should create dedicated funding streams for infant and toddler care, recognizing that these programs face higher per-child costs and cannot be served by public school-based programs. Further, the state should ensure that subsidy rates through the Child Care Assistance Program reflect the true cost of quality care, including competitive wages that help providers recruit and retain qualified staff.

**Do you support the recommendations contained in IL House Resolution 137 that calls for state dollars to support infrastructure needs of community-based early care and education providers? Do you have suggestions to achieve the recommendations contained in HR137?**

Yes, I strongly support state investment in infrastructure for community-based early care and education providers. When I worked as a fourth-grade teacher, our school was infested with ants, lacked a working HVAC system, and was often without working bathrooms. Those facility issues kept teachers from doing their best work and students from learning. It is essential that the state appropriately supports the infrastructure needs of education providers.

To that end, I would recommend that the state streamline its Early Childhood Construction Grant process as much as possible to ensure that providers can access these funds without needless paperwork.

Further, Illinois should consider supplementing grant money with a revolving loan fund that allows

providers to access low- or zero-cost loans for capital improvements that would improve enrollment, expand services, and allow the providers to repay the funds with their improved cash flow. These revolving loan funds can provide a sustainable additional source of capital beyond grantmaking.

**A common challenge with the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is that income eligibility to participate is standard across the state. Do you support a higher CCAP income eligibility threshold based on geographic cost of living differences? (e.g., Chicago compared to Peoria).**

Yes, I support a higher CCAP income eligibility threshold based on geographic cost of living differences. A family of four living in the 12th District making \$75,000 is ineligible for CCAP, but they should qualify, given the substantial cost-of-living challenges facing the district. Given the higher housing costs associated with that residential area, a heightened threshold ensures that all families with similar cost burdens are treated similarly under CCAP.

## Israel

**Do you support maintaining the current Illinois anti-BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement) law that prevents state pension dollars from being invested in foreign companies that engage in actions that are “politically motivated and are intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or otherwise limit commercial relations with the State of Israel or companies based in the State of Israel or in territories controlled by the State of Israel”?**

While the current law was created to respond to anti-semitism, it ultimately isn't the right tool to keep Jewish communities safe. The state has a responsibility to keep all communities safe, but—as we've seen an increase in antisemitic attacks while the current law is in place—restricting political boycotts isn't the way to do it. Whether you agree or disagree with BDS, I've never participated in BDS activities, restricting political boycotts, or speech, sets a precedent that can be used by any community, including Jewish organizations that rely on boycotts as a form of advocacy. The state should focus on real solutions to make the Jewish community safer, including stronger civil rights protections, increased hate crime enforcement, and authentic community partnerships.

**Do you support the continued ability of the Illinois State Treasurer to invest in bonds issued by the State of Israel, which has been permitted in Illinois since 1997?**

I support responsible investments that help grow Illinois' financial portfolio.

## **Older Adults**

**Illinois' aging population continues to grow, however there are not enough state resources available to support older adults who wish to remain in their homes to age in place. Do you have ideas for state-level policies that would support older adults' ability to remain in their homes?**

Yes, supporting older adults who want to age in place is both fiscally responsible and the right thing to do. Illinois should increase funding for home and community-based services through the Community Care Program, which provides in-home care, adult day services, and emergency response technology. Illinois should strengthen property tax relief for seniors through programs like the Senior Homestead Exemption and Senior Freeze, which currently requires seniors to re-apply to establish their eligibility.

## **Security**

**The Illinois Not-for-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP-IL) administered by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency-Office of Homeland Security (IEMA-OHS) received state budget appropriations of \$20 million in SFY23, \$18 million in SFY24, \$8 million in SFY25, and \$7.5 million in SFY26. The program provides security funding support to 501(c)(3) nonprofits and houses of worship that demonstrate they are at risk of violent extremist attacks. Do you support increasing the appropriation for this program in future fiscal years?**

Yes, I support increasing the appropriation for this program in future fiscal years. With antisemitism on the rise across the United States, we should be increasing, not decreasing, this grant program.

## **Antisemitism**

**Antisemitism is surging across the United States. What will you do as a member of the IL General Assembly to help combat antisemitism in our communities, schools, and institutions of higher education?**

Antisemitism is completely unacceptable. Attacks on any community, Jewish, Muslim, Black, Asian, LGBTQIA+, or anyone else, undermine the safety and dignity that all people deserve. As someone whose wife is Jewish and we're raising our children in the Jewish faith, this issue is personal to me. When I hear about antisemitism, I think about the risks to my own family.

The first thing any leader can do is to speak out. I will be a vocal leader on this issue, condemning antisemitism wherever it rears its head. I will also work in partnership with the Jewish United Fund and other community members on what they need to see from their elected leaders.

I support strengthening Illinois' hate crime laws and ensuring law enforcement receives specialized training to investigate and prosecute antisemitic incidents effectively. The state's Help Stop Hate program is a good start, but we need dedicated resources and accountability measures to ensure it reaches communities across Illinois.

## **Health & Human Services**

**The state of Illinois relies on numerous nonprofit social service agencies, to provide health and behavioral health support services to some of our state's most vulnerable populations. Medicaid reimbursement rates have lagged inflation and state human services contracts do not include a yearly cost of living increase. What would you do to help alleviate the funding and workforce challenges for nonprofits that are serving low-income populations?**

This is a huge threat to our state: chronic underfunding forces nonprofits to cut services, maintain waiting lists, or be distracted from their core mission. Illinois must establish automatic annual cost-of-living adjustments tied to the consumer price index for all state human services contracts. The state must also implement transparent, evidence-based rate-setting methodologies for all human services—right now, many rates are set arbitrarily rather than based on actual service delivery costs. Finally, Illinois should streamline administrative requirements and reduce bureaucratic burdens on nonprofit providers, allowing them to focus resources on service delivery rather than compliance

paperwork.

**What would you do to decrease the state's reliance on State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs) and increase availability of community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities?**

More funding is the first step to increasing the availability of community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Illinois must raise Medicaid reimbursement rates that don't cover the full cost of providing services. We need rates that allow CILA providers to offer competitive wages, recruit qualified staff, and accept residents with complex behavioral or medical needs who currently remain in SODCs because community providers lack resources to serve them. Although there's a budget impact to this approach, many community-based options are ultimately more cost-effective than SODCs, meaning this approach could ultimately yield savings overall.

Illinois should also invest in diverse housing models, including supported living arrangements, host family programs, and individualized housing options with wrap-around services, recognizing that one-size-fits-all group homes don't work for everyone.

**While the IL General Assembly has taken a number of proactive steps to promote gun safety and reduce gun violence, what additional measures do you think should be pursued by the General Assembly?**

Illinois has made significant progress under Governor Pritzker's leadership, but gun violence remains a public health crisis that demands continued action.

Illinois should increase funding for the Illinois State Police's gun enforcement activities, ensuring they have resources to trace crime guns through eTrace, enforce FOID card revocations, and investigate illegal gun trafficking from neighboring states with weaker laws. I would also support strengthening our Firearms Restraining Order (red flag) law by ensuring law enforcement, family members, and health care providers know how to utilize it effectively and that courts have adequate resources to process these cases quickly.

Finally, Illinois should continue investing in evidence-based community violence intervention programs that address the root causes of gun violence—these programs have proven effective at reducing shootings in high-risk communities and deserve sustained, long-term funding rather than year-to-year appropriations.

**How do you propose that Illinois balance the SFY 2027 state budget considering inflationary concerns, the projected \$2.1 billion state deficit, H.R. 1 implications, and other federal cuts?**

Balancing the FY 2027 budget amid a projected \$2.1 billion deficit and federal cuts will require difficult but strategic choices. We cannot allow this crisis to become an excuse for abandoning Illinois' commitment to essential services or the vulnerable populations who depend on them.

My approach would prioritize strategic efficiency improvements before considering broad cuts or tax increases. For instance, Illinois spends more than almost any other state on back-office and administrative expenses in our school system. If we brought that spending down to the national average, we'd save upwards of \$1 billion per year. Similarly, we need to improve our pension fund management by reallocating investments to passive investments and lower-cost managers, as this can generate hundreds of millions in additional returns without cutting benefits or raising taxes.

While looking at cuts, we must protect investments that save money long-term, even if they require upfront spending—community violence prevention programs, for instance, reduce expensive emergency room visits and criminal justice costs. Similarly, maintaining adequate funding for human services reimbursement rates prevents more expensive institutional care.

On revenue, I would support closing remaining corporate tax loopholes and ensuring fair taxation before considering broad-based tax increases that burden working families.

**With hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans, including lawfully present refugees, expected to lose Medicaid and SNAP, what can the state do to mitigate the worst of these harms?**

Illinois needs to stand up for its most vulnerable populations, even as the federal government turns its back on its historic commitments. Illinois should join other states in litigation challenging these unlawful federal cuts to lawfully present immigrants. Second, we should maximize enrollment in programs that remain available—ensuring every

eligible person gets connected to food banks, charitable care programs, and community health centers that receive federal funding, regardless of immigration status. We should also explore limited state-funded programs targeting the most vulnerable, particularly children, pregnant women, and people with life-threatening conditions.

## Refugee Services

### **What additional measures do you suggest the ILGA take to protect the rights of refugees and other immigrants in the State?**

Illinois has been a national leader in protecting immigrants, but given the unprecedented federal assault on immigrant communities, we must do more.

First, we need to resist the Trump administration's unconstitutional immigration enforcement policies as

fully as we can. Illinois should continue to join other states in litigation against these policies. The general assembly must ensure the Illinois Attorney General's Office receives adequate resources to cover these

lawsuits, investigate violations, and ensure compliance across all jurisdictions.

Second, Illinois must protect its immigrant communities in the face of federal overreach. The State of Illinois recently established the Illinois Bivens Act, the Court Access, Safety, and Participation Act, and the Health Care Sanctity and Privacy Law, which provide new legal protections for immigrants facing unjust enforcement from ICE officers. These are all great policies, and I would work with affected communities to ensure they're properly implemented.

Third, Illinois should set up a state legal defense fund to provide representation for immigrants facing deportation proceedings, modeled on programs in New York and California. Many refugees and lawfully present immigrants who are losing federal benefits will also face removal proceedings they cannot afford to fight.

## Candidate Priorities

### **What are some of the key priorities you would like to pursue in the IL General Assembly?**

My three priorities are (1) bringing down the cost of housing, (2) promoting high-quality public schools, and (3) fighting for government accountability and integrity.

1. Housing costs are forcing young families out of Illinois and trapping others in situations that don't work for them. We need to build more houses. I'll streamline approval processes to reduce construction costs, expand housing near transit, and fast-track affordable housing developments. This is a crisis, and we need to treat it like one.

2. Illinois spends over \$1 billion annually on bloated back-office school administration—more than double the national average per student—while teachers lack classroom resources. I'll cut administrative waste, reduce burdensome mandates that pull teachers from instruction, and provide real oversight to ensure districts like CPS serve students responsibly.

3. Too many elected officials put their own interests ahead of voters. I'll fight for public financing of elections through small-dollar donor matching, expand inspector general authority to independently investigate the General Assembly, and promote competitive elections so voters can hold officials accountable.

### **Any additional information you would like to share with us?**

I look forward to meeting with the Jewish United Fund. My wife and I are raising our children in the Jewish faith, and many residents in the 12th District are Jewish. The Jewish United Fund carries out an important mission, especially during a period of rising antisemitism. I hope to be a partner in Springfield on combating antisemitism, protecting our Jewish neighbors, and building bridges between the Jewish community and the larger Illinois community.