



Jewish United Fund

— EDUCATION —

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CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRES

ILLINOIS HOUSE DISTRICT 13

Election Day: March 17, 2026

In December 2025 and January 2026, JUF met with candidates for IL House 13. 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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# Adam Braun

## 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?**

I support expanding early childcare programs of all types across the state. Increasing childcare costs are one of the primary challenges many families confront. In the Illinois House of Representatives, I will support increasing quality childcare options and making childcare more accessible to families throughout Illinois.

**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?**

As State Representative, I will support dedicated revenue streams to prioritize early childcare programs, including supporting the infrastructure needs of community based early care and education providers.

**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).**

I support measures that increase access to childcare for as many families across the State as possible.

## 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.

**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.

## 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?**

Having previously been a member of the Holocaust Human Services committee and a volunteer for Maot Chittim, I support ensuring that older adults can live safely in settings on their own choosing. To best accomplish this goal, the State should ensure dedicated resources for programs that assist older adults with transportation, day-care, respite care, legal assistance, counseling, rental subsidies, and home-delivered meals.

## 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 believe this program is of crucial importance to the Jewish community and I strongly support increasing the appropriation. As a member of Anshe Emet and Anshe Sholom and as a Chicago Jewish Day School parent, I see the tremendous impact that providing (necessary) security services has on institution budgets. It is, effectively, a tax that Jewish communal organizations pay before they provide their first dollar of service to the community. As State Representative, I will lead the fight to increase the NSGP appropriation.

## **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 previously served as a member of the Illinois Holocaust and Genocide Commission and, as Executive Deputy Attorney General, worked closely with JUF to fight anti-Semitism. I look forward to continuing this partnership as a State Representative. In the Illinois House, I will support programs that educate law enforcement on hate crimes and bias, that provide resources to schools to educate children about anti-Semitism, and ensure that college students are free from anti-Semitism on campus.

## **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?**

As State Representative, I will support fully funding social services. To ensure adequate funding for nonprofits that are serving low income populations, I believe that we need to pass sustainable state budgets backed by adequate revenue. We also need to identify waste and inefficiencies in other parts of state government so that state funds are put to their best use.

**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 strongly support community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am particularly proud of the work I did as a staff member in the Governor's Office to help launch Libenu and ensure that there are culturally appropriate residential options for the full spectrum of the Jewish community. We need to continue to expand community based options so that families of individuals with disabilities have a full spectrum of available options.

**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?**

As Executive Deputy Attorney General, I led the office's gun violence protection efforts. I am proud to have spearheaded passage of the Firearm Industry Accountability Act to hold the firearm industry accountable for its misleading marketing practices. We launched the most extensive crime gun tracing platform in the nation so that Illinois law enforcement agencies can take illegally trafficked firearm off our streets. We expanded the State's Crime Victims Services program to help break the cycle of violence and ensure that victims of gun crime have access to healthcare, financial compensation, job training, and culturally appropriate counseling services. And, we continued to build up the State's Community Violence Interruption infrastructure, including Trauma Recovery Centers modeled after the NATAL program.

In the Illinois House of Representatives, I will ensure that these programs remain fully funded and are that our gun violence reduction efforts are fully implemented.

## **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?**

The state budget has real, immediate consequences on each of us every day. When my son was born, he received extensive services through the Early Intervention program. EI is a program available to every child in the state to provide what is often life sustaining therapy. It's how my son learned how to swallow. These are not "luxury" services.

When Bruce Rauner decided that the State was not going to have a state budget, it was programs like EI that were jeopardized.

We need to make sure that never happens again. We can do that by passing responsible, sustainable, balanced budgets.

I would propose a three step approach to balancing the FY '27 budget: (1) better accessing existing, underutilized revenue sources, (2) improving the State's tax collection infrastructure, and (3) making the wealthiest among us pay their fair share.

There are numerous existing revenue sources that are operating with impunity in legal gray areas without paying appropriate taxes. We need to either regulate them to protect consumers and tax them consistent with their legal counterparts OR we need to say they're illegal, fine the operators, make them pay back taxes, and put them out of business. Right now, we do neither, and it's costing the State potentially \$1B a year.

Second, we need to build a better enforcement mechanism at the Department of Revenue to collect taxes. This past year, the State declared a tax amnesty. It expects to collect as much as \$300M from the amnesty. But let's be clear on what that money is and who it comes from. It's money that is already due and owed to the State. We just haven't been able to collect it. And, it comes disproportionately from high net worth individuals who are best able to avoid taxation in the first place and have sophisticated tax advisors who can help them navigate the amnesty. If we fully staffed IDOR, we would collect this tax revenue each year in due course and build it into our state budget on a recurring basis.

Once we've done all of that, we should have an honest conversation about our tax code. I supported Governor Pritzker's Fair Tax proposal and I've supported past efforts for a surcharge on the highest incomes. The wealthiest among us should pay their fair share to ensure that the State services that we all rely on our adequately funded.

## **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?**

There are three immediate things that the State should do to mitigate the harmful impacts of the federal government's efforts:

First, we need to ensure that our social services are adequately funded so that we can provide healthcare and food to the most vulnerable.

Second, the State needs to prioritize support for safety net providers to ensure that they are equipped to provide services in the communities they serve.

Finally, the State should identify efficiencies in other parts of state government that would allow it allocate resources to support programs that support the most vulnerable.

## **Refugee Services**

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

My grandparents came to the United States after the Holocaust. My grandfather was in a Displaced Persons camp following the war and came to America with no money and speaking no English. My grandmother was in convalescent homes in Italy and Sweden. Both of them endured harrowing travels through other foreign countries with no money in order to make it to America.

When my grandfather arrived, he received job training and communal support. That allowed him to get a

good, union job as a steelworker at Continental Can outside of Pittsburgh. He worked there for nearly 40 years.

When I worked in the Attorney General's office, I traveled with Attorney General Raoul to the San Ysidro border crossing between San Diego and Tijuana. When we crossed to the Mexican side of the border, we saw thousands of people amassed on a plaza outside of the border crossing, literally holding all their earthly possessions in both arms.

70 years ago, those people were my grandparents.

On the State level, we need to continue to embrace and defend the TRUST Act. The TRUST Act makes us safer. It allows law enforcement to focus on actual crimes and gives immigrants faith that they can turn to law enforcement for protection. We also need to support job training, like the program that benefited my grandfather, and ensure that school districts and health departments are resourced to be able to absorb new arrivals to our community.

## **Candidate Priorities**

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

My priority will be to build on the work that I did in the Attorney General's office to fight back against the Trump Administration with an affirmative agenda that protects civil rights, protects abortion, ensures access to affordable healthcare, and keeps our streets safe.

I will work to stabilize our state budget so that Illinois has strong fiscal footing and can provide services to the people of our state regardless of their income or zip code. This is particularly true when it comes to ensuring healthcare equity.

I will also work to prioritize full funding for Chicago Public Schools.

But, more than any substantive issue, I'll prioritize being responsive to my constituents. When my family was fighting our insurance company's denial of coverage, we relied on the support and assistance of our state legislators. That's the type of representative I want to be. When someone in our district needs support, I want them to know they can rely on me to help. As your State Representative, I will prioritize answering the phone and being present for the people of the 13th District.

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

I'm a Chicago Public Schools parent and have been an Uptown resident for 15 years. I'm running for state rep because we need experienced fighters who can protect our rights and stand up for our communities.

Illinois needs leaders who not only have the right values, but who have a track record of ensuring our rights are protected, that healthcare is affordable and accessible, that our streets are safe, that public transportation serves our needs, and that we have good public schools. I am the only candidate in this race with the experience of not just working in government, but of accomplishment at the highest levels.

For five years, I served as Executive Deputy Attorney General under Attorney General Kwame Raoul.

During my service, I worked with Attorney General Raoul to stand up to the Trump Administration's attacks on our civil rights, protect abortion rights, and keep our environment clean.

We fought back against price gougers who took advantage of vulnerable people and made the perpetrators of the national opioid epidemic pay to remediate the harms they caused.

We passed legislation in Springfield that protects teenagers from predatory vaping companies and legislation that holds the firearm industry accountable for their misleading advertising.

We built the most extensive crime gun tracing platform in the nation so that Illinois law enforcement agencies can take trafficked firearms off our streets.

I worked side by side with Attorney General Raoul – and I'm proud that he has endorsed my campaign. But the most important title I've ever held is not Executive Deputy Attorney General. It's Dad.

As a parent, I've experienced how communities, working together, can overcome big challenges. When my child was born with a rare genetic disorder, our insurance company denied coverage for a medical device that would allow him to hear. I'll never forget the sleepless nights wondering how we would pay our medical bills.

But we didn't let the insurance companies get away with it. We organized families across the state, took the fight to the insurance industry, and passed legislation to require them to cover these devices for children.

This is the record I will bring to the Illinois House of Representatives.

# Ridge Knapp

## 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?**

Every family should have access to early childhood programs in our state, but we must acknowledge that some families will have different needs when it comes to childcare. Perhaps families want to keep their kids closer to home, seek to fulfill religious obligations, or have children who require specific care. Just as HR137 accounts for nonprofit childcare in construction, ILGA should keep these institutions in mind when considering state funding.

**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 these recommendations. During my time at the State's Attorney's Office, I saw how tedious work and progress became when information was stored in siloes across and between a number of different offices; the creation of a central Department of Early Childhood is an excellent first step in this program's modernization. To achieve the recommendations, I would suggest maintaining a clear line of communication between the agency and community-based early care and education providers, an allocation of resources within the Department based on immediacy of need, and a stable funding stream to ensure grants are delivered as soon as possible.

**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 would support this.

## 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"?**

Given the state of the Illinois pension fund and budget, I believe state pension dollars should be invested where they will receive the highest return. However, I believe that the anti-BDS law does require reform. Other states with similar laws on the books, such as North Carolina, list a different set of companies in which those states are barred from investing. Further, I have concerns over the state of Illinois limiting individuals and corporations from taking 'politically motivated' stances against the government of a foreign nation. I look forward to hearing more on this matter.

**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?**

Given the state of the Illinois pension fund and budget, I believe the State Treasurer should invest in bonds that provide the highest return.

## 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?**

As our population ages, ensuring the ability for older Illinoisans to age at home or in their communities, is paramount. During my time at NORC at the University of Chicago, a key area of research in which I worked was long-term care for the elderly and disabled. A number of our findings could be implemented at the state level,

including the expansion of insurance coverage for telehealth services, as well as dental, eye, and hearing care. If aging at home is no longer an option, increased state funding and grants for community-based assisted living could also keep these folks in their neighborhoods.

## 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, and I support increased appropriations for this program for two reasons. First, I am worried at the rise in political and ideological violence in our country. We have witnessed attacks on both sides of the political aisle in the last year, not to mention continued threats to nonprofits and houses of worship fanned by fringe partisans and right-wing conspiracy theorists. Second, regardless of this rising tide, it pays dividends for the state government to invest in the building of community across Illinois, and by improving safety measures at nonprofits and houses of worship (with these institutions' input), we may allow this community to flourish safely.

## 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 should never be tolerated or allowed to proliferate in the United States. Far too often, this surge stems from ignorance before it becomes malice; first and foremost, I would seek to listen to and center Jewish voices in combatting this hatred. I am hopeful that my conversation with JUF, as well as other Jewish groups, community and elected leaders, and individuals will offer insights into how best I may lend my voice to this effort.

## 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?**

To properly address state-level funds for any number of social programs, we must successfully implement a graduated income tax at the state level. As for workforce challenges, the state must work to improve the pipelines that train and prepare more new staff as they enter the social service workforce.

**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?**

Once more, the answer lies in funding. Community-based residential options for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities should be the gold standard: a community will always be able to provide better and more knowledgeable care than a government responsible for the welfare of 12.7 million. SODCs do provide an important resource for those who may not have another option, but with just seven statewide and just one in Cook County, there is much to be desired in terms of keeping individuals with these disabilities near to their families and communities. As a state representative, I will meet with residential options for these Illinoisans based in Chicago to learn how best to allow these folks to remain in or nearer to their community.

**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?**

The General Assembly has taken a number of great steps to curb gun violence, but more can and must be done. Per recommendations from major gun violence prevention groups, I would push the state to further limit bulk firearm purchasing, and seek to limit qualified immunity for police officers accused of civil and constitutional violations. I would also seek for state and local law enforcement to better share their crime and sentencing data, to ensure repeat

offenders don't slip through the cracks. We must also acknowledge that a vast number of illegal guns in Illinois come across the border from Indiana—we should seek to work with law enforcement agencies in both of our states to curb illegal gun trafficking.

**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?**

It is absolutely critical that we pass a graduated state income tax. We must also seek new sources of revenue at the city, county, and state levels, whether those be those put forth by the Illinois Revenue Alliance, or others such as congestion pricing, 'bike bounties' (allowing people to individually report illegally-parked cars), or closing corporate tax loopholes.

**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 state of Illinois must fill in the gaps that the federal government has torn in our social safety net. I am supportive of Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2025-08, and believe that we have an obligation to help feed and aid all those in our state who need it.

## Refugee Services

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

We should create a statewide version of the CityKey to allow refugees and other immigrants a form of identification beyond the need for a drivers license. We must also stand against Republican members of the General Assembly who seek to repeal the TRUST Act, which would remove the ability of undocumented Illinoisans to receive drivers licenses. A key research project I conducted while at the State's Attorney's Office examined the implications of undocumented Illinoisans' inability to obtain a driver's license before the passage of similar legislation. The result? Thousands more Hispanic and Latino Illinoisans entered the felony justice system than would have otherwise. We cannot risk backsliding here.

## Candidate Priorities

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

My campaign is centered on creating a more affordable Chicago, advancing equal justice for all, and future-proofing the state of Illinois. Towards these ends, my key priorities are as follows:

- Pass a graduated income tax
- Greatly expand funding to government programs that serve our homeless population
- Pass legislation at the state level to ensure new technologies are not used to discriminate against Illinoisans, increase our cost of living, or steal and sell our personal data to the highest bidders
- Allow people to build more housing across our city and state – and then build that housing
- A more in-depth list of my policy positions may be found at [ridgefor13.com/issues](https://ridgefor13.com/issues)

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

I am running for this office to bring a new generation's perspective to Springfield, one that knows the importance of affordability, accessibility, and justice because I've lived it. As a renter, I've had to move apartments when my rent's gone up. As a young person, I saw the impact Big Tech and AI would have on our energy infrastructure long before it caused our energy bills to spike. And while my view of justice is shaped in part by my time at the State's Attorney's Office, it is shaped even more so by the experiences of my father. Towards the end of his life, my dad's mental and physical health declined to a point at which he lost his job—a job he needed even as a senior—which led to him losing his apartment, and slipping through the cracks into homelessness. He passed just over two years ago, from a condition that could have been treated had he received the help he needed. Now, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago has more than doubled since 2020. When I saw cuts to funding for homelessness services in the last state budget, I knew I couldn't sit on the sidelines.

I am so often inspired by the Jewish community's commitment to equality, justice, and compassion, and of course, your perseverance—a perseverance without which I would not be here. In the early years of the 20th century, my great-grandfather's family, the Kornoyskis, fled anti-Jewish violence in czarist Russia, crossing the European continent and setting down roots outside of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

Today, I see that spirit of perseverance and compassion very much alive, working to right the wrongs of the Trump regime and fighting to make the world a better place. I hope we may build that world together.

# James O'Brien

## 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?**

As Illinois expands school-based early childhood programs, we should strengthen—not sideline—our community-based nonprofit providers. I support public-private partnerships that maintain strong public oversight, protect workforce standards, and ensure stable reimbursement so nonprofit centers can recruit and retain qualified educators. The state should invest in infant and toddler care capacity, while building a coordinated early-learning system that keeps public programs strong and ensure families have high-quality options across settings.

**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. Expediently awarding relevant grant funding and replenishing the Early Childhood Construction Grant resources will require appropriate staffing of state agencies to effectively process as well as progressive revenue options. I support the progressive revenue options outlined in the Illinois Revenue Alliance's proposal and would use my extensive experience negotiating state budgets to facilitate to appropriate allocation of funds.

**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 but income eligibility thresholds should also be increased generally across the state.

## 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 approach this issue by looking at the outcomes of the policy and asking what would be most helpful for promoting peaceful relations. I think many that support BDS are motivated by a genuine desire to see peaceful resolution and view this as a tool to accomplish that. My hesitation with broad economic boycott policies is that they can produce unintended consequences for working people, both Palestinians and Israelis, who will need to have shared economic connections if there is to be a chance for lasting peace. I think Illinois should avoid using retirement funds in ways that risk harming workers or narrowing the space for productive dialogue.

**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?**

The elected Illinois State Treasurer should have the choice to continue investment if they choose to do so. While I do not support the Netanyahu administration, Israeli coalitions can change with each election. Should the Treasurer decide, they can use this economic relationship to advocate for a peaceful resolution and elevate voices working towards a lasting peace.

## 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 was recently talking to a voter about the untenable property tax increases, and she shared with me that due to this increase and the recent passing of her husband, she would unfortunately need to sell her home. We need to help seniors be able to stay in their homes by mitigating property taxes via increased statewide education funding, facilitating pipelines for a caregiving workforce, and increasing funding for in-home caregiving.

## **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, nonprofits and places of worship are under increased threat of violent attacks. Appropriations need to be increased to meet the moment and keep people safe.

## **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?**

This is a personal topic I do not take lightly. My wife is Jewish, we had a Jewish wedding, and when we have children, they will also be Jewish. I have greatly enjoyed becoming an ally for the Jewish community and learning about the culture, the holidays, and the diaspora.

As a member of the IL General Assembly, I will combat antisemitism by doing my best to create more allies. Whether it's an invitation to a Shabbat meal or a Passover Seder at our home, a trip to the Holocaust Museum, or just a casual meeting where I get to personally share why antisemitism affects my family so deeply, I believe we can work towards rooting out the misunderstanding and ignorance that drives antisemitism by forging personal connections and educating those who need it the most. This would be backed up by a legislative agenda that has zero tolerance for discrimination and helps forge connections to root it out.

## **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 would advocate for progressive revenue streams (digital ad tax, closing corporate loopholes, etc.) to mitigate the forthcoming federal cuts to Medicaid to ensure service to low-income populations. As the only person in the race with significant budget experience, I would use this to advocate for services to protected populations and nonprofits that serve them.

**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 support a person-centered approach that prioritizes community-based residential options over large institutional settings. This includes increasing funding and incentives for group homes, supported living, and other community-based services, while ensuring families and individuals have access to quality care, trained staff, and necessary supports. Expanding these options will give people with intellectual and developmental disabilities more independence, dignity, and choice in where and how they live.

**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 support requiring new handguns to be sold with childproofing features, microstamping on firearms to make it easier for law enforcement to track criminals, and requiring gun safety training for individuals purchasing firearms. These efforts need to be combined with support for anti-violence initiatives that provide opportunities out of the cycle of violence.

**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?**

Progressive revenue options are key to navigating the impending financial situation. I support solutions such as a digital ad tax, a weighted vehicle registration tax, and revenue solutions that don't put more of a strain on working families who already can't afford the cost of living. Policies like a weighted vehicle registration tax also kill two birds with one stone by taxing vehicles that put added wear and tear on our infrastructure, leading to unnecessary and costly road work.

**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?**

In addition to progressive revenue sources which I already highlighted, the state can continue to bring a fair tax amendment up for a ballot vote each time it is eligible in an election. We cannot settle for anything less if we want to continue funding these important initiatives. Additionally, the state can work with nonprofits and family foundations to help shore up some of these funding gaps.

## **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 proud grandson of Irish immigrants, I feel strongly about supporting refugees and immigrants who are seeking safety and a better life in Chicago. Additionally, my wife's grandmother was a Jewish refugee who fled Yemen in 1949 for safety in Israel. Hearing their personal experiences and stories over the years has made me recognize this is not an abstract policy topic. At the state level, I support providing resources to allow rapid response networks to scale, holding anyone who breaks state law accountable for their actions, and enhancing safe zones to prevent ICE raids at sensitive areas.

## **Candidate Priorities**

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

I want to focus on affordability and defending Chicago against a federal government that has lost its mind

My over a decade of public service at all levels of government educational background (JD from Chicago-Kent with a Certificate in Environmental and Energy Law, and MS in Energy Policy and Climate from Johns Hopkins), have allowed to hone experience in budget making, negotiating systemic reforms, and building coalitions necessary to take rhetoric and turn it into results.

Specifically, I want to stabilize the state budget to ensure we are able to continue to help people in need at a time when the federal government is hostile to that notion. I would advocate for significantly increased education funding and pension parity for Chicago to help our schoolchildren but also help mitigate property taxes that are making housing increasingly unaffordable. I would also be uniquely helpful with reducing utility bills via regulations on data centers to ensure they pay their fair share for use of the grid. Housing is a core focus area as we must fix our housing supply shortage by building as many new affordable units as possible by providing gap financing with revolving loan funds and using light touch regulation to facilitate building, such as allowing accessory dwelling units across the state. This needs to be combined with a fearless approach to pushing back against the federal government and protecting our neighbors.

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

As a born and raised Chicagoan, I am grateful for the remarkable work JUF has done and the positive influence your organization has had on our society. Your commitment to partnering with other nonprofits, charities, and family foundations has made an enormous impact across Chicago and Illinois that has not gone unnoticed.

Our campaign is building momentum by the day as is highlighted by the endorsements of the 47th Ward Democrats,

40th Ward Democrats, Chicago Growth Project, Jesse White, nine members of the General Assembly, and two MWRD commissioners. I look forward to working with JUF on initiatives and legislative priorities in Springfield and throughout Chicagoland.

# Demi Palecek

## 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?**

Yes. Nonprofit childcare providers are essential infrastructure serving families, especially low-income and working class families who depend on affordable, quality care. As a public school-based programs expand, we must ensure nonprofit providers aren't undermined but rather supported as critical partners.

**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 HR137's recommendations. Community-based early care and education providers need infrastructure investment to maintain and expand services.

To achieve HR137 recommendations, I'll fight for dedicate state budget line items for childcare infrastructure including facility repairs, expansions, equipment upgrades, and technology improvements. I'll support grant programs specifically for community-based providers in underserved areas.

We should also explore public financing mechanisms like low-interest loans or bonds for childcare facility development, and tax credits for businesses supporting childcare infrastructure in their communities.

**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, absolutely.

## 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.

**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?**

No.

## 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. Aging in place is both a dignity issue and cost-effective alternative to institutional care.

I support: expanded funding for home and community-based services including personal care attendants, meal delivery, home health services, and transportation assistance; affordable housing modifications and accessibility improvements through grants or low-interest loans for ramps, grab bars, bathroom modifications, and safety upgrades; property tax relief and freezes for seniors on fixed incomes so they're not forced out by rising taxes; expanded Medicaid home care services and elimination of waiting lists; caregiver support programs including

respite care, training, and financial assistance for family caregivers; technology support for telehealth, emergency response systems, and social connection tools reducing isolation; and community support infrastructure like adult day programs and senior centers providing social engagement and services.

We should also address social isolation through volunteer visitor programs, intergenerational community programs, and transportation to social activities. Aging in place requires comprehensive support addressing health, housing, economic security, and social connection.

## 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 strongly support increasing funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

Synagogues, mosques, churches, community centers, and nonprofits face real threats of violent extremist attacks.

Antisemitic violence is rising, as are attacks on Muslim communities, Black churches, and LGBTQ+ spaces. Organizations serving vulnerable populations deserve protection.

## 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?**

Combating antisemitism is urgent moral imperative, and I'm committed to fighting it as every level!

Communities - Support and increase funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program protecting synagogues and Jewish institutions from violence. We also need to strengthen hate crime laws and enforcement, ensuring antisemitic attacks are prosecuted vigorously. Fund community education programs combating hate and antisemitism of every form.

Schools/Higher Education - Require comprehensive Holocaust education and antisemitism awareness in K-12 curriculum. Train educators to recognize and address antisemitism. Protect Jewish students from harassment and discrimination through strong anti-bullying policies and enforcement. Combat Stereotypes.

Ensure colleges and universities have robust policies protecting Jewish students from harassment and discrimination. Support Jewish student organizations and cultural programs. Require universities to address antisemitic incidents seriously and transparently.

I would love to work with Jewish communities and organizations to continue to evolve threats and effective responses. Jewish communities deserve safety, dignity, and everyone's participation to protect them so no one lives in fear.

## 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 funding crisis threatens essential services for our most vulnerable residents. Nonprofits are state's safety net, and we're starving them.

I'll fight for: significantly increased Medicaid reimbursement rates reflecting true costs of service delivery and adjusted annually for inflation; mandatory cost-of-living increases in all state human services contracts; streamlined

payment processes reducing delays that strain nonprofit cash flow; multi-year contract commitments allowing nonprofits to plan and retain staff; and workforce development funding supporting living wages, benefits, and professional development for nonprofit workers.

**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?**

Community-based care is both better for individuals and more cost-effective than institutional settings. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve to live in their communities with appropriate support.

I support: dramatically increased funding for community-based residential options including group homes, supported living arrangements, and family support services; expedited development of new community placements to eliminate waiting lists; enhanced support for families providing in-home care through respite services, training, and financial assistance; workforce development for direct support professionals including living wages, benefits, and career pathways; and transition planning and support for individuals moving from SODCs to community settings.

**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 progress, but we need to go further. I support:

Gun manufacturer accountability: Legislation holding manufacturers liable for gun violence and directing settlements into community violence prevention and victim services. I'm actively working on this.

Enhanced background checks: Close remaining loopholes, strengthen enforcement, improve data sharing between agencies.

Assault weapons restrictions: Continued enforcement of assault weapons ban and prevention of workarounds.

Safe storage requirements: Mandatory safe storage laws with penalties for negligence leading to gun access by children or unauthorized users.

Red flag law expansion: Strengthen and expand Firearms Restraining Order processes, ensuring family members and law enforcement can intervene when someone poses danger.

Community-based violence prevention: Massively increase funding for proven interventions like Cure Violence, youth employment programs, mental health services, and trauma-informed care. Gun violence is public health crisis requiring health-based responses.

Domestic violence protections: Strengthen prohibitions on gun ownership for domestic abusers and improve enforcement.

**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?**

This budget crisis requires progressive revenue solutions, not austerity harming working families. I'll fight for progressive income tax reform taxing wealth at higher rates, closing corporate loopholes, implementing financial transaction taxes, and ending subsidies for corporations that don't deliver community benefits. We need to coordinate with other states resisting Trump's cuts, leverage remaining federal programs, and sue the federal government for unconstitutional funding withholding. I'll protect essential services, education, healthcare, human services, while investing in revenue-generating infrastructure and maintaining pension obligations. I oppose austerity budgets, regressive sales tax increases, and privatization schemes. Illinois has a revenue problem, not a spending problem. We can balance budgets by making the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share while protecting working families. This requires political courage to fight corporate interests, I have that courage.

I have that courage.

**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?**

Federal benefit cuts will devastate vulnerable communities. Illinois must act aggressively by creating state-funded programs replacing cut federal benefits for children, elderly, people with disabilities, and refugees. We need emergency food assistance through expanded food banks and school meal programs, healthcare access through state-funded programs regardless of immigration status, and increased support for community-based organizations providing direct services. Long-term, we must build state healthcare infrastructure independent of federal Medicaid, invest in food security programs including community gardens and nutrition assistance, and streamline applications for remaining federal programs. We should coordinate with other states challenging cuts and pursue lawsuits against illegal federal actions. We cannot replace the entire federal safety net, but we can prevent the worst harms while fighting to restore benefits. This requires immediate emergency appropriations and sustained commitment to protecting vulnerable residents.

## **Refugee Services**

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

Illinois must be a true sanctuary protecting refugees and immigrants from Trump administration attacks. I'll fight for zero ICE cooperation, banning all state and local law enforcement collaboration, data sharing, and resource provision for federal immigration enforcement. We need a state-funded legal defense fund for people facing deportation, expanded Know Your Rights programs, and policies protecting mixed-status families. I'll expand healthcare access regardless of immigration status, fund refugee resettlement organizations and mutual aid networks, ensure language access across state services, and protect refugees' right to work and access professional licensing. We must prohibit discrimination based on immigration status, create reporting mechanisms for immigration-related threats, and fund community-based rapid response networks. Schools should never share information with ICE, and we must support in-state tuition for undocumented students. I'm currently organizing community defense against ICE raids and facing military investigation for speaking out. I know what refugees need safety, dignity, and state government that protects them. I'll make Illinois a true sanctuary and as a Mexicana it is my passion

## **Candidate Priorities**

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

1. **True Sanctuary and Immigrant Justice:** Make Illinois true sanctuary with zero ICE cooperation, expanded legal services, state-funded deportation defense, and comprehensive protections for refugees and immigrants. I'm organizing community defense now and facing military investigation for resisting Trump's use of Guard for ICE enforcement.
2. **Reproductive Freedom:** Expand abortion access through funding for abortion funds, practical support infrastructure, provider protections, elimination of barriers, and addressing maternal mortality disparities. Enshrine reproductive rights in state constitution. Protect against any restriction attempts.
3. **Housing Justice:** Implement rent control, massive public housing investment, tenant protections, ban corporate landlord ownership, and policies addressing homelessness through Housing First approaches. Housing is human right and foundation for health, education, and economic stability.