



Jewish United Fund

— EDUCATION —

TOGETHER *for* GOOD

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRES

ILLINOIS SENATE DISTRICT 9

Election Day: March 17, 2026

In December 2025 and January 2026, JUF met with candidates for IL Senate 9. 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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Patrick Hanley

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 mixed delivery system when it comes to early childcare. A key principle of my campaign is extending access and affordability to services like childcare to more families. That said, public-private partnerships and state grants or loans are helpful ways the state can quickly and meaningfully keep childcare providers serving kids and families. Grant programs exist and I support them. Smart Start, ExceleRate, and Great START each provide essential funding and support to childcare providers, although these are depending on uncertain federal 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 the recommendations in House Resolution 137. Quality early care and education infrastructure is foundational to both child development and family affordability. When parents can access affordable, high-quality childcare, they can work reliably and contribute fully to the economy. When we leave community-based providers without adequate facilities, we're creating inequity and leaving capacity on the table.

Just a few ideas/suggestions include:

- + Prioritize the remaining ECCG funds: Award the outstanding Early Childhood Construction Grants on an expedited timeline. The application process should be simplified to reduce the technical barriers that disadvantage community-based providers relative to school districts. We should consider pre-application technical assistance to help smaller providers navigate the grant process.
- + Create a sustainable funding mechanism: Rather than treating ECCG as sporadic, we should establish dedicated, recurring funding for early childhood facilities. This could come from a combination of sources: state general revenue, public-private partnerships, or reallocating existing capital dollars toward high-ROI early childhood infrastructure.
- + Coordinate across state agencies. The Department of Early Childhood, State Board of Education, and Capital Development Board should develop a unified capital strategy to get money out the door quickly and coordinate on delivery and building/repairing.

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, particularly in the 9th Senate District, this is a real challenge and barrier to access for a vital program for so many working parents. I would support pegging the income eligibility to cost of living to ensure families are able to afford the care that is intended for their children.

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 any move that delegitimizes Israel as a sovereign state and trading partner. I recognize that

exaggerated or overheated criticism of Israel or Zionism can quickly manifest as antisemitism, with terrible consequences in our communities. For these reasons, I do not support the BDS movement and support our current approach.

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, I support the Illinois State Treasurer's continued ability to invest in Israeli bonds. The state should maintain the full range of investment tools available to maximize returns on public funds. Investment decisions should be made on financial merit and fiduciary responsibility, not subject to shifting political pressure on particular foreign policy positions. Importantly, we should not single out Israel in ways inconsistent with how we think about other states, partners, and allies.

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?

Helping older Illinoisans remain in community is important to me. As my mother ages, I want her to have the assistance, care, and affordability she'll need to remain in the house she raised our family.

First, we can expand home modification assistance through grants that help older adults make accessibility improvements (such as grab bars, ramps, bathrooms) that allow them to safely remain at home.

Second, we can strengthen community-based in-home services including nursing, physical therapy, and personal care by ensuring Medicaid and state reimbursement rates keep pace with costs.

Third, I support affordable housing programs and zoning reforms that create accessible, livable neighborhoods, bringing costs associated with housing down and supporting fixed income residents.

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 program provides vital support to communities facing real threats. When I speak with community leaders in the district, the NSGP program is a top priority and concern. I will be an outspoken advocate for this funding to ensure that Illinois is a partner in the physical security of at-risk communities.

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 have been loud, clear, and emphatic in my strong and swift condemnation of antisemitism in communities and in political discourse - from the right and the left. Tragically, antisemitism manifests in many ways, finding its way into so many issues of foreign and domestic policy and politics. I recognize that antisemitism is endemic to so many Western cultures. Antisemitic tropes sit just below the cultural surface. In our current moment, antisemitism is clearly breaking into the mainstream, both online and off.

When a CPS board member took out her frustration during a budget fight by shouting "Free Palestine" at a Jewish board member, that was clearly antisemitic. I called it out. When two young staffers were murdered in Washington D.C. earlier in the summer, I spoke out about the danger and violence that so often springs from antisemitic tropes and sloganeering. As State Senator, I will use my voice, my online presence, my powers as a legislator, and my coalitional organizing to stamp out antisemitism wherever it rears its ugly

head.

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 crisis we're creating through penny-wise, pound-foolish policymaking. Nonprofit social service agencies are laying off experienced staff because reimbursement rates haven't kept pace with inflation. That means worse outcomes for vulnerable Illinoisans and higher costs downstream.

The solution seems to me pretty straightforward: increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to reflect actual costs of quality care, and build annual cost-of-living increases into state human services contracts.

When we starve nonprofits, we're forcing them to provide worse services at higher eventual cost to the state. We should also create a workforce development fund to support recruitment, training, and retention of quality human services 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?

I would advocate substantially increasing funding, programming, technical assistance, and focus on community-based residential options for individuals, that are so often preferred by individuals and families. It is my hope that increased focus will be a clear demand signal to spur more availability, more spots and units, and rebalance the state's reliance on SODCs. That will allow us to be targeted in improving services for individuals in state care and perhaps, one day, reimagining institutional care in the state of Illinois.

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 am an outspoken supporter of the RIFL Act, now moving through the legislature. RIFL would enlist gun industry stakeholders, like manufacturers, to the cause of gun violence prevention by aligning their financial incentives with the public goal of reducing violence. RIFL would shift liabilities for medical expenses as a result of gun violence on to manufacturers, rather than providers or victims. Moreover, I believe we can continue to improve secure storage and enforcement mechanisms for many of the common sense gun laws passed in recent years.

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 is the \$55+ billion question. When I enter the legislature in January, 2027, the SFY 2027 budget will largely be decided, but my hope is that it will include progressive revenue solutions to help the state invest in some of the areas where the federal government has fallen down, in particular healthcare, food assistance, and education.

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?

When federal government abdicates responsibility, Illinois must step up. We must protect and expand state and locally-funded alternatives to federal Medicaid and SNAP benefits for populations that lose eligibility.

Fundamentally this is a question about budget/values and about delivering services and state capacity.

The state recently spent \$20m to shore up food pantries statewide. This is a good first step towards ensuring our pantries and food depositories have the resources and volunteer support to be resilient and provide support for many new clients.

We must also reduce administrative barriers to state support and find new ways to partner with nonprofits and civil society groups to deliver healthcare and food assistance and raise awareness (and create new pathways) among key populations where there is the greatest need.

We can also provide technical assistance to individuals and families losing benefits because of overly opaque or complicated federal requirements. To be clear, part of the purpose of the federal legislation is to allow bureaucratic fatigue to rob recipients of intended benefits. The state, townships, and civil society partners must find ways to step in and help claw back every federal dollar owed to Illinoisans.

Refugee Services

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

Illinois should be a welcoming state that protects the rights and dignity of refugees and all immigrants. I am proud of recent legislation passed during veto session to create friction with often unlawful federal enforcement. I believe we must find ways to strengthen legal protections against unlawful detention and deportation, protect and expand access to legal representation (such as the Cook County Public Defenders Office), protect workplace rights and fair labor standards for migrants, and expand access to state and local identification and drivers licenses.

We must also focus on ways to incentivize law enforcement to partner with the state in protecting minorities and immigrants. While the TRUST Act protects individuals from LEO collaboration with federal

civil immigration enforcement, it's important that state and local law enforcement reassure immigrant communities, conduct internal training around possible conflicts, and build trust in our communities.

Candidate Priorities

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

Affordability should be a north star for Illinois. Achieving affordability will take different measures in different sectors, sometimes regulatory and other times, leveraging markets. We need to tackle the housing supply crisis through zoning reform and streamlined development, protect tenants through strong enforcement of existing laws, and create pathways for working families to build wealth through homeownership. Healthcare affordability, access, and cost controls means ensuring Medicaid reimbursement rates for nonprofits keep pace with inflation, expanding community-based services for people with disabilities, and making sure Illinoisans don't lose coverage when the federal government cuts benefits.

A key priority for me and in my district is gun violence prevention. I am working closely with leading advocates on the RIFL Act and other possible legislation and will continue to advocate to keep our communities, our schools, and our places of worship safe from gun violence.

Sustainability is extremely important to me. As an environmental advocate and leader, I will pursue policies that advance the green transition in Illinois as we continue to lead on carbon reduction and energy transition. Our clean energy goals will require constant innovation and ambition to ensure infrastructure is being built and modernized and impacted workers are being retrained and compensated. For the sake of our kids and their kids, we must deliver on the promise of clean energy and restore ecological balance in Illinois.

Any additional information you would like to share with us?

Please know that while I am not Jewish by birth, my community has always included Jewish friends, loved ones, neighbors, holidays, and solidarity. In the days following October 7th, I told a group of more than a hundred local political leaders and community members, Am Israel Chai. I am running for the State Senate to authentically represent the interests and perspectives and experiences of the 9th District and I recognize the significance and the responsibility of standing up for our Jewish communities, particularly at such a challenging and dangerous moment. I am a friend and ally and look forward to our conversation.

Rachel Ruttenberg

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?

My goal is to support expanding early childhood education opportunities everywhere. I understand that we need ongoing investments and improvements in the system, and providers and advocates have been working together for a long time to provide equitable access to funding streams. I would be open to public-private partnership opportunities or other investments if there is a gap for certain providers.

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 support funds for the infrastructure needs of school and community-based early childhood education programs. I recognize that there are few options for construction or renovation funding for early childhood centers and I am glad to know that funding has been included in the last two fiscal years of capital bills. I appreciate JUF's advocacy around allowing non-profits that rent to be eligible for funding streams as well. Our early childhood education programs need to have well-supported facilities for the health and safety of staff and children.

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 expanded access to CCAP, recognizing that that would require major increases in funding. I understand that there is a childcare workforce shortage and that in order to provide higher, more competitive wages, it may require further limiting eligibility. I would be open to better understanding the impact of that on families across the state and if there are other ways families who are left out could be supported. This kind of tough decision would be a way to prioritize limited or shrinking investments in the short-term, instead of building for a future vision where CCAP is expanded and funded in the way it should be.

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?

There are state policies that could better support older adults and help them age in place. So many older adults feel priced out of their communities because of ever-increasing property taxes. At Cook County, I had the privilege of working with researchers and policy experts to develop recommendations for property tax reform measures that would increase the senior freeze and maximize the use of the state's senior deferral program. In addition, I would be a

proponent for state investments in programs that provide financial assistance for costly home repairs and accessibility modifications, as well as community care programs that provide support.

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

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 will be a strong voice on behalf of the Jewish people in the State Senate. In addition to advocating for increases in the non-profit security grant program, I would also champion the training and enforcement of our hate crime and human rights laws across the entire state and with attention to jurisdictions that refuse to enforce existing laws. Law enforcement officers can be better trained on identifying and investigating hate crimes, and the state should be providing education to residents on how to get help if a person has experienced discrimination or a hate crime. Finally, I would build relationships with our higher education institutions, including Oakton Community College and Northwestern University, to understand the experiences of faculty, staff, and students who are facing antisemitism and help hold higher education leaders and bad actors accountable.

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 a former non-profit leader, I understand the stresses our non-profit social services entities face every day. They are absolutely critical to our state's social safety net and the need will only continue to grow with continued federal attacks and cuts, and the pending implementation of H.R. 1. I will always be an advocate for living wages and worker protections. Plus, I understand how burdensome it can be to do business with the state and will be a champion for fair contracting practices, such as timely payments and cost of living increases. Attacks on our health and human services funding models by the federal government may require state leaders and providers to explore alternative payment structures and measures for workforce recruitment and retention.

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 be a champion for people with disabilities and programs that promote independence, community inclusion, and educational and living supports. I understand the key roles that JUF-affiliated agencies play in providing social services and support to people with disabilities and would be your partner in ensuring we are making state investments and advocating for wage increases for the provider community, as well.

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 am proud to live in a state with leaders who are pushing forward to enact common sense gun laws. I am very concerned about what kind of rulings may come down from this U.S. Supreme Court that could hinder the policies Illinois has already passed and I will work constructively with my colleagues on those challenges as they come. I also am deeply concerned about maintaining and supporting the infrastructure of non-profit community violence intervention programs that have been built over the last 10 years - and have had a profound impact on prevention in

disproportionately impacted communities of color. Those community violence intervention strategies, which combine street outreach, therapy, and employment opportunities, have been invested in from all levels of government. With a sudden lack of available federal funding and supports, the state will need to step up with the help of local government and philanthropy.

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?

We will need to take a close look at the impact of federal budget cuts and challenges. While the state has often layered budget items on top of federal investments, there is an opportunity for state leaders to center our own communities' values, consider new revenue sources, and chart a different path forward. We will not be able to fill all of the gaps, but we can work together to make sure our most vulnerable residents are not left behind.

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 does not abandon people and the state can help mitigate the harms of slashed healthcare and food assistance. I will support programs that provide cash assistance, supplemental nutrition through educational institutions, and more to mind the gap until there is change in Washington. I will also work with our state agency leaders to ensure we are delaying implementation where we can, pushing back, and bringing lawsuits where necessary.

Refugee Services

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

I was proud the General Assembly took action in response to the campaign of terror waged by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol agencies. I believe we need to be creative in our approach and aggressive as we will no doubt see additional actions in the coming months. Recent laws that have been passed provide for accountability measures and include partnering with local law enforcement in order to strategically use all of the laws on our books in Illinois to protect residents. We may need to adjust as these laws make their way through the courts. I plan on coordinating closely with the Attorney General on this and any other plans to combat the assault on our rights and pivot where necessary.

Candidate Priorities

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

My key priorities include protecting our social safety net in the face of federal attacks and budget cuts. We have an opportunity to center and advocate for our community values in upcoming state budget negotiations, and I will fight for funding and programs that serve our most vulnerable residents, such as elderly people and people with disabilities. I will also be a champion for our constitutional and civil rights. As the only female Democratic attorney in the State Senate, I will work to codify in state law protections for immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, LGBTQ+ people, and others at risk with the Trump administration and our current U.S. Supreme Court.

Any additional information you would like to share with us?

I grew up in the northern suburbs with a large Jewish family and I have lived in Evanston for the last 10 years. I'm the mom of two girls that go to public schools, I have a Master's from Northwestern University, and I'm a lawyer. I have a deep passion for public service and I've spent the last 20 years working on our most complex social issues, fighting for racial equity, and supporting our most vulnerable residents. I have deep experience working with coalitions of non-profit advocates and directly impacted people to draft, negotiate, and pass legislation in Springfield. You can learn more about my experience at <https://rachelforillinois.com/about>. I look forward to representing my neighbors across the 9th State Senate District.