

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
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Speaker Welch: "The House will be in order. Members will be in their chairs. We shall be led in prayer today by Reverend Chauncey D. Brown. Reverend Brown is the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Maywood, Illinois. He is also national director of Thousand Churches Connected for the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. Reverend Brown is the guest of mine today. Members and guests are asked to refrain from starting their laptops, turn off all cell phones, and please rise for the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Brown."

Pastor Brown: "Definitely, Father, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for a opportunity to lead this great State of Illinois. Lord, it's my prayer that you will guide our Legislators, that you will keep them, that you will cover them, that you will lead them in every decision, that, Lord, you will lead them to serve the oppressed and the overlooked, Lord, that you will guide our minds, you will guide our thoughts, you will guide our practice. And, Lord, remind us of why we first became who we are today. Lord, I pray a special prayer for our Governor, our Lieutenant Governor, our Speaker, and all of those who make the future of Illinois greater. Lord, protect us, build a hedge of protection around us, each and every person under the sound of my voice. We pray that your will be done, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. In Jesus' name we do pray, Amen."

Speaker Welch: "We will be led in the Pledge of Allegiance today by the Honorable Leader Representative Gordon-Booth."

Gordon-Booth - et al: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it

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stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Speaker Welch: "Roll Call for Attendance. Leader Gabel is recognized to report any excused absences on the Democratic side of the aisle."

Gabel: "Speaker, let the record show that Representatives Olickal, Tarver, Vella, and Yednock are excused today."

Speaker Welch: "The record will show. Leader Keicher is recognized to report any excused absences on the Republican side of the aisle."

Keicher: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please let the record reflect that all Republican Representatives are here to conduct the people's business."

Speaker Welch: "The record will reflect. Have all recorded themselves who wish? Have all recorded themselves who wish? Have all recorded themselves who wish? Mr. Clerk, please take the record. There being 112 Members present and answering the roll call, a quorum is present. The regular Session will stand in recess. The Doorkeeper is recognized for an announcement."

Doorkeeper Hill: "Mr. Speaker, the Honorable President Harmon and the Members of the Senate are at the door and seek admission to the chamber."

Speaker Welch: "Madam Doorkeeper, please admit the Honorable Senators. Would the Members of the House and our guests from the Senate please take their seats? Would the Members of the House and our guests from the Senate please take their seats? As designated in House Joint Resolution #52... Shhh. Please take your seats. As designated in House Joint Resolution #52, the hour of noon having arrived, the Joint Session of the

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103rd General Assembly will now come to order. Mr. Clerk, is a quorum of the House present?"

Clerk Hollman: "A quorum of the House is present."

Speaker Welch: "President Harmon, is a quorum of the Senate present in the chamber?"

President Harmon: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A quorum of the Senate is present."

Speaker Welch: "There being a quorum of the House and a quorum of the Senate in attendance, this Joint Session is now convened. I'd like to take an opportunity, before our Governor arrives, to acknowledge a few dignitaries that are in the House. Want to start with our Auditor General, former colleague of ours here in the House of Representatives, Honorable Frank Mautino. Our State Treasurer, still standing tall for Illinois, State Treasurer, the Honorable Michael Frerichs. Our Comptroller, the Honorable Susana Mendoza. Our Secretary of State, the Honorable Alexi Giannoulias. Our Attorney General, the Honorable Kwame Raoul. Our Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, Mary Jane Theis. Honorable Justice from the Supreme Court, Justice P. Scott Neville, Jr. Honorable Justice from the Supreme Court, Justice David K. Overstreet. Honorable Justice from the Illinois Supreme Court, Justice Lisa Holder White. Honorable Justice from the Illinois Supreme Court, Justice Joy V. Cunningham. And Justice from the Illinois Supreme Court, the Honorable Justice Mary Kay O'Brien. The Chair recognizes the House Majority Leader, Representative Gabel."

Gabel: "Mr. Speaker, I move for the adoption of Joint Session Resolution #2."

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Speaker Welch: "Mr. Clerk, read the Resolution."

Clerk Hollman: "Joint Session Resolution #2. Be it

RESOLVED, That a committee of ten be appointed, five from the House, by the Speaker of the House, and five from the Senate, by the President of the Senate, to wait upon Governor JB Pritzker and invite him to address the Joint Assembly."

Speaker Welch: "Representative Gabel has moved for the adoption of the Resolution. All those in favor signify by saying 'aye'; all those opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Resolution is adopted. Pursuant to the Resolution, the following are appointed as a committee to escort the Governor. The appointments from the House are Representative Lilly, Representative Mussman, Representative Ortiz, Representative La Ha, and Representative Schweizer. President Harmon."

President Harmon: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The appointments from the Senate are Senator Lightford, Senator Castro, Senator Holmes, Senator Stoller, and Senator Bennett."

Speaker Welch: "Will the Committee of Escorts please convene at the rear of the chamber and await the Governor? The Doorkeeper is recognized for an announcement."

Doorkeeper Hill: "Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the State of Illinois, JB Pritzker, and his party wish to be admitted to the chamber."

Speaker Welch: "Madam Doorkeeper, please admit the Governor and his guests. Members and guests, the Honorable Governor of this great state, the Honorable JB Pritzker."

Governor Pritzker: "Thank you very much. Thank you all very much. Speaker Welch, President Harmon, Lieutenant Governor

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Stratton, my fellow Constitutional Officers, Members of the 103rd General Assembly, Chief Justice Theis, and of course all the members of the Supreme Court, honored guests, the First Lady of Illinois, my soulmate, MK, and all the people of the great State of Illinois, I am so grateful to be here today to deliver my sixth State of the State and Budget Address. I love my job. I love living in Illinois and spending every day working to improve the lives of our residents. In a world seemingly filled with chaos, it's a privilege to be tasked with bringing stability and progress. We live in a state that's filled with people who exude decency and kindness. And if you take the time to listen, Illinoisans will tell you rich and rewarding stories about how we came to be who we are. Here in Springfield, one of the most interesting guys I know is Ian Hunt, the head of acquisitions at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. And if you ask Ian, he will tell you one of favorite stories. Illinois owns an original version of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. It's known as the Everett Copy. One of only five to have been handwritten by Abraham Lincoln himself. It's named after Edward Everett, a famed orator and a former Massachusetts Senator and Governor. At Gettysburg on November 19, 1863, Everett was the other guy who spoke. He gave a two-hour speech that almost no one remembers. When Everett was finished, Abraham Lincoln got up and he delivered a two-minute speech that has never been forgotten, a life lesson for every politician. The Everett Copy of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address remained in private hands for almost 80 years. And then in 1943, with a world war raging across the

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globe, word came to Illinois Governor Dwight Green. The owner of the Everett Copy had passed away and the document was likely to be auctioned off. Governor Green desperately wanted Illinois to own this priceless piece of history that is so intimately connected to our most famous son. So, his administration came to an agreement with the seller to purchase it for \$60 thousand. The problem was Illinois didn't have \$60 thousand to spend on the Gettysburg Address in 1943. And Governor Green knew this. So, he did something unusual. He enlisted the school children of Illinois to collect pennies and to nickels to raise the money. There must have been great skepticism that kids were going to come up with enough money to buy the Gettysburg Address for the state, especially in the middle of a cold war... of a world war and at the heels of the Great Depression. But no one should ever doubt the children of Illinois. A few years ago, a newspaper interviewed a Springfield man named Gene Rubley who noted that, as a young boy in 1943, he sacrificed his Saturday afternoon movie for a few months so that he could give his weekly allowance to the donation drive. It took the children of Illinois only 6 months to raise \$40 thousand. Marshall Field III, the grandson of the famous department store magnate, helped with the rest. In March of 1944, almost exactly 80 years ago, 4 school children presented the handwritten Gettysburg Address to the Illinois State Historical Library, and it has been our most valuable state artifact ever since. I love this story. It has everything. Imagination, ingenuity, sacrifice, patriotism. It includes elected officials who didn't stop at no and children, with a vision beyond their years, doing something important

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for our future. It's a story about how, penny by penny, Illinoisans once saved something important. It's a story about our past, but it's also a story about who we are today. Because penny by penny, we are still working together saving important things for our state. Five years ago, when people said we couldn't do it, many of us went to work eliminating our bill backlog and balancing five state budgets in a row. We created a \$2 billion Rainy Day Fund. We achieved nine credit upgrades. And in the face of a pandemic and high inflation, we delivered historic tax relief, provided record levels of rental and mortgage assistance, and reduced interest cost by paying more than \$11 billion in debt off. We've also grown Illinois' economy to over \$1 trillion. That's more than most nations. In 2023 alone, we attracted billions of dollars in new business investments and created tens of thousands of new jobs. In fact... in fact, on average, a new business moved to Illinois or expanded here every single day last year. Thanks to our bipartisan tax credit legislation, Illinois is now the world's fourth largest data center market, and we broke an all-time record for film and TV production revenue. Tourism is booming. Last year, Illinois' hotel industry set a record at \$5.5 billion. In the Midwest, we are now the number one state for workforce development. Across all 50 states, we are number 2 for infrastructure, number 2 for education, number 3 for power grid reliability. We have the number one and number two best business schools in the country. And since 2018, we've moved up a whopping 13 spots in CNBC's Best States for Business. These are the things that matter to businesses looking for a home. Where their workforce

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can live, work, and play affordably and with world-class health care and education. Now, we have a lot of work left to do, but we, together, have met this moment that we are in. Do not let the doom grifters steal your optimism about what's ahead for Illinois. Our future is bright, and opportunity lies ahead. Last year, we launched a groundbreaking, multi-year plan called Smart Start to make Illinois the best state in the nation for preschool, child care, early intervention, and home visiting. It's already making a huge difference for young families across Illinois. We thought we would be able to add 5 thousand preschool seats by the end of year one. We exceeded that goal by 15 percent. We created 5,823 new preschool spots. All of which are options that parents didn't have before. As a result, right now we have over 82 thousand publicly funded preschool classroom seats. The highest number in our state's history. And staying on the Smart Start plan, we will achieve universal preschool by 2027. Smart Start also expanded access to early intervention and evidence-based home visiting services for families with babies and young children by adding 26 more programs serving nearly 3 thousand more kids. And we established the nation-leading Early Childhood Workforce Grant program, thanks to our initial investment of \$130 million, stabilizing and raising wages for a workforce that is primarily women and people of color. That helps providers maintain and grow staffing, while still delivering the quality care that Illinois children deserve. Smart Start is having the desired benefit for working parents and their children. Child care utilization rates are higher than ever before with 166 thousand children receiving services. There

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was a real fear that our entire child care system might crumble in the wake of the pandemic. Instead, it's growing. Heather Andrade is a Rochester parent. And when I recently visited with her, she told me that Smart Start has changed her child's life. In 2019, after a tremendously difficult pregnancy, Heather brought little Natalia into this world, a healthy, happy little baby. But as Natalia grew, Heather noticed that she was experiencing some delays in her development and in her speech. Heather knew that she needed help. Thanks to Smart Start, Rochester Elementary was able to open a full day program, offering early childhood education and child care, including early intervention services, like speech therapy. Since Natalia's first day in that program, her progress has been nothing short of remarkable. She can spell her name. She can write her name. Once nonverbal, Natalia now talks so much that they're even considering pulling her out of speech therapy. Natalia is on track to thrive when she enters kindergarten, and her path ahead couldn't be brighter. Heather's success story as a mom stands as a testimonial. It reminds us of all the parents out there who need just a little extra help to give their kids that smart start. Heather is here today, and I ask you to give her a big round of applause. It's with Heather and Natalia in mind that I propose we stay on plan and increase Smart Start funding by \$150 million in year 2 to create 5 thousand more preschool seats, continue growing child care, and reach thousands more families with critical early childhood services. And I also ask that in this budget we begin the first phase of consolidating State Government's early

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childhood programs into one agency called the Department of Early Childhood. With a \$13 million investment, parents and providers will have a one-stop shop for resources and programs, from finding child care and preschool to accessing Early Childhood Block Grants and day care licensing. Nearly every study shows that investing in early childhood isn't just about your child's first five years. It's also about paving the way for success in their K-12 education and beyond. Every single year I have been Governor, we have increased our investments in education because a quality education is the foundation of a good life and the cornerstone of a strong society. It's why education has been a central tenet of all six budgets I have proposed. There have been some standout champions among you, like Majority Leader Lightford and Senator Loughren Cappel, along with Representatives Davis and Stuart, who have spent their entire careers fighting for our public schools, all while weighing the tough choices to keep our budget in balance. And the results are plain to see. In 2023, US News ranked Illinois high school students number two in the nation in college readiness and CNBC ranked Illinois number two overall for education. We notched our highest graduation rate in 13 years, and teacher retention was the highest ever on record. The rate of ninth graders on track to graduate now exceeds pre-pandemic levels. Chronic absenteeism is turning around, and proficiency in both English language arts and math increased dramatically. We can draw a direct line from these results to last year's budget. Our \$45 million teacher pipeline grant program brought 5,384 new teachers into the field, reaching more than 730 thousand students in

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170 districts with the highest need. Teachers are the single most important investment we can make in our schools. So, I propose that we invest another \$45 million in the teacher pipeline program, bringing thousands more educators into the field. The Evidence-Based Funding model is working, so my budget proposal follows the EBF law's recommendation, increasing it again by \$350 million. And we will fully fund special education and continue increasing funds for school transportation by \$30 million. Higher education continues its tremendous upward trajectory. For the second year in a row, the Illinois Community College System celebrated historic headcounts, marking the second largest increase in enrollment numbers in the last 30 years, and far higher than the rest of the United States. More Illinois students are now taking advantage of our great colleges and universities with well-funded MAP grant and AIM HIGH scholarship programs. So, the net tuition cost for most Illinois students attending Illinois schools continues to decline. Our higher education institutions are on the rise, and it's important that year in and year out, even in lean budget years, we demonstrate a commitment to these institutions, which is why my budget proposal includes a more than \$30 million increase in direct operating support for public higher education institutions, and that's on top of the continuing record capital investments that we're making through Rebuild Illinois. Improving educational attainment and retention is assisting private industry to overcome the Illinois workforce shortage, and it's also having a similar effect on State Government. We're finally moving closer to achieving the staffing levels that

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we need to support our work. The Departments on Aging, Human Services, Healthcare and Family Services: every social service agency has improved its hiring to fill out its budgeted headcount. DCFS, for example, has achieved its highest staffing in more than 15 years, through a combination of funding, ingenuity, and sheer hard work. DCFS is more focused than ever on how to best protect Illinois children. Today, nearly every call to the abuse and neglect hotline is answered immediately. That's up from only 50 percent back in 2019. Of the more than 94,525 investigations conducted last year by DCFS, 99.7 percent were indicated and initiated within 24 hours. And within 7 days, 96 percent of children have been seen by an investigator. With the additional \$14 million in funding in FY25, DCFS will reach a headcount of 4 thousand staff for the first time in more than 2 decades. As always, there is more to do, and DCFS is committed to doing it. I want to thank outgoing DCFS Director Marc Smith for his five years of service in the state's most difficult job. And I also want to welcome incoming director Heidi Mueller, who served two gubernatorial administrations as the pioneering head of the Department of Juvenile Justice. I've visited many DJJ facilities over my time in office, and it's impossible to ignore the trust and admiration the state's most vulnerable children have for her. We are lucky to have her in this new role. The people who work at DCFS are witness to trauma and heartbreak every single day. They're rarely lauded for their successes and most often used as a convenient punching bag for larger societal issues. They work long hours, and on occasion, these heroic workers have been the subject of

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threats and violence. I want them to know that I see them and that I see their work, and that I am incredibly grateful for their service. And I ask each of you in this chamber to offer them your gratitude too. Their dedication is worthy of recognition. Restoring the safety net has been a goal of mine from the very beginning. But to do so, we've had to work on transforming our health care ecosystem. After so many years of neglect, we've begun to turn things around by reducing the price of prescription drugs, implementing hospital transformation, and enacting a lower cost state-based health insurance marketplace. I want to particularly thank Senators Linda Holmes, Ann Gillespie, and Laura Fine as well as Leader Robyn Gabel for their groundbreaking work on health care reform over the last few years. And now it's time that we take another giant leap forward. This Legislative Session, I'm introducing a Bill to curb predatory insurance practices, putting power back into the hands of patients and their doctors. It's called the Healthcare Consumer Access and Protection Act, and it has three parts. The first part targets a practice called utilization management. What is utilization management? That's insurance speak for denying coverage. Utilization management allows insurance companies to boost profits by requiring that consumers get permission before they receive care. It won't surprise you to know that those requests are frequently denied. One method of utilization management is referred to as 'prior authorization,' where a consumer must get permission from the insurance company to get treatment from their own doctor that their doctor has deemed medically necessary. Another method of utilization

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management is called 'step therapy,' where a patient is forced to try a less effective treatment and then have that fail before getting the actual quality care that their doctors said they needed in the first place. Any doctor will tell you how much they loathe these practices and how often they are used to deny patients the medications and treatments that they desperately need. Almost everyone has a horror story about prior authorizations and step therapy. Lest you think that I'm exaggerating, let me share one such story. One of our state employees was diagnosed by his cardiologist with serious heart disease and scheduled open heart surgery. Three days before the procedure, which took a month to schedule, the health insurer denied the prior authorization request. The insurance company made the decision, without consulting this person's doctor, that heart surgery was unnecessary, leaving the employee to cover the cost out of pocket or not get treated. It was only after my office got involved at the request of this individual's family, who was afraid he could die, that the prior authorization was granted. That is simply unacceptable. Doctors and their patients should be making decisions about patient care. There should never... there should never be an instance where an insurance company employee can deny coverage for something as serious as open heart surgery. We should never, ever, ever, ever cede these decisions to the whims of insurance executives whose focus is always on the bottom line. When it comes to patient care, the only bottom line that really matters is what needs to be done to keep people healthy. The legislation I am proposing would totally ban step therapy in Illinois and force insurance

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companies to use the same definitions of medical necessity that doctors use. Among the other features of this Bill, Illinois will become the first state in the nation to ban prior authorizations for in-patient adult and children's mental health care. That means patients suffering a mental health crisis can get the care they need without jumping through hoops designed to deny coverage. And we're going to make sure that insurance plans publicly post all treatments that require prior authorization so consumers can compare plans when they're shopping for coverage. We're also going to prohibit insurance companies from selling short-term, limited-duration plans, also known as junk insurance. These are plans... these are plans that seem enticing because they offer lower premiums to bridge gaps in insurance coverage. But in reality, these plans fail to meet even the minimum standards of the Affordable Care Act. They don't cover pre-existing conditions. They don't cover maternal health care. They don't cover mental health and substance use treatment or prescription drugs. Like 12 other states in this nation, it's time for Illinois to ban junk insurance plans. The second part of this legislation covers network adequacy. That's the standard insurance companies must meet to ensure that there are enough in-network doctors to treat consumers when and where they need health care. In recent years, we've seen the rise of ghost networks. That's where an in-network directory shows doctors and specialists who in reality either aren't accepting any new patients, aren't in-network, or don't exist at all. Health insurance companies should be helping consumers get quality care, not tricking them. So, we're going

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to require insurance companies to update their in-network directories of doctors to reflect the actual availability of health care, and we're going to punish them if they don't. The third piece of the Healthcare Consumer Access and Protection Act prevents insurance companies from unfairly increasing rates on consumers. Last year, my administration was proud to work with Members of the Senate, the House, and other stakeholders to end unchecked rate increases for small group insurance. Those folks are the ones who cover small businesses and individuals. This year, we're going to require that large group insurance carriers do the same. Now, I'm haunted by the reality that there are Illinoisans who are suffering and, in some cases, have died because they lost a battle with an insurance company. I have talked to people who have just given up because of the mountains of paperwork, or the endless search for an in-network doctor, or the dozens of hours on the phone arguing with an unsympathetic insurance company. Getting the health care you need shouldn't be this hard. Now, I know how hard the insurance industry will fight me on this. But let me be perfectly clear: I am willing to spend serious political capital and put my shoulder to the wheel to get this done. It will save lives and lower health care costs for millions of Illinoisans. It's also time to help those who have suffered financial harm, often through their no... no fault of their own, from past failures of a broken health insurance and health care billing system. Treating a health emergency is not an optional expense. But too many Illinoisans have had their credit ruined or have been pushed into bankruptcy when they had one unexpected

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accident or one prolonged illness. So, today, I propose that over the next 4 years we eliminate \$4 billion of medical debt for over 1 million Illinoisans. Working with a national nonprofit called RIP Medical Debt, it costs on average one penny to buy back and eliminate every dollar of medical debt, and we can start this year with a \$10 million dollar appropriation to relieve nearly \$1 billion in medical debt for the first cohort of 340 thousand Illinoisans. County Board President Toni Preckwinkle has already done this for residents of Cook County. Let's make this a reality for all of Illinois. In Illinois, a serious effort to reduce maternal mortality rates is long overdue. And black women in our state are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. It's imperative that we act now, ensuring that, as we do, we also reduce and eliminate racial disparities. The current system is failing our most vulnerable women and babies. The solution lies, as it often does, at the community level. Jeanine Valrie-Logan is a certified nurse-midwife at the Birth Center PCC in Berwyn, the first freestanding nonprofit birthing center to open in Illinois. But in Jeanine's home community on the South Side of Chicago, no such center has ever existed. After years of mobilizing and submitting grant applications, Jeanine finally is able to open the Chicago Southside Birth Center to meet her neighborhood's needs, offering a full spectrum of reproductive care from contraception, STI screenings, and abortion to pre-natal, birthing, and postpartum care. It can be a model for how Illinois can decrease black maternal mortality. Because of my... the work that my administration has

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already done, beginning this year, doulas, midwives, and lactation consultants can now be recognized as Medicaid health care providers, ensuring that they can be fairly compensated. That... that will make more services more readily available to communities with the highest mortality rates. And we can do even more. I intend to break down bureaucratic barriers in State Government by coordinating work across agencies to improve access to a full spectrum of reproductive health care services. Our... our Department of Public Health will provide grants to assist providers with Medicaid certification and licensing associated with starting and sustaining a community-based practice. We'll also invest an additional \$1 million in DCEO capital grants relating to the cost of opening these centers. And DHS will invest \$1 million in a pilot program to ensure new moms and babies have clean diapers, along with an additional \$5 million into home visiting for our most vulnerable families to connect new moms and babies with the resources they need to be healthy and thrive during babies' first year. My budget also proposes investing \$12 million to create a Child Tax Credit for families raising our youngest children. By targeting this investment at low- and middle-income families with children under three, we can put money back in the pockets of our newest parents who need it most and make those early years just a little bit easier. Altogether, we're making a \$23 million investment that will put us on a path to birth equity, a path and a destination that Jeanine and her colleagues in the field can be proud of. Jeanine is here today, and I would ask her to stand and be recognized. One of my missions as

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Governor is to make life easier for working families. Establishing a child tax credit, eliminating medical debt, lowering the cost of health care, making it easier to get a college education, bringing quality child care closer to home so moms and dads can go to work. These are not esoteric policy proposals but actually do lift the burdens up, away from everyday Illinoisans. And even though inflation continues to cool off, folks are still feeling the squeeze every week at the grocery store. So, there's one more thing that we ought to do. For the good of our state's working families, let's permanently eliminate the grocery tax. It's one more regressive tax that we just don't need. If it reduces inflation for families from four to three percent, even if it only puts a few hundred bucks back in families' pockets, it's the right thing to do. Food access is far from the only necessity that we're tackling. In 2021, I signed an executive order that launched Home Illinois, a whole of government approach to prevent and end homelessness. And last year, we put this plan into action, investing \$200 million into prevention, crisis response, housing units, and staffing to ensure that every person has a fighting chance. In a matter of months, Home Illinois sustained and created thousands of new shelter beds for longtime Illinois residents across this state. We provided housing and services to young adults aging out of foster care who were at-risk of becoming unhoused. And we gave one-time financial support to working Illinoisans who, due to an acute crisis, fell behind on their rent and risked losing their home or their apartment. We kept thousands of Illinois'... Illinoisans in their homes, people who might

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otherwise have become unhoused. Take Jasmine for example. Jasmine was living in her car with her five children while she was eight months into a high-risk pregnancy. When Jasmine was finally connected to Housing Forward, a homeless services agency in Oak Park, they immediately took her in, providing shelter and wraparound clinical services. While at Housing Forward's RISE Center, Jasmine gave birth to a healthy little baby, enrolled her kids in early childhood education, registered for a GED program, and now Jasmine is looking for employment. Today, she's on a path to permanent housing. There are many hundreds of people like Jasmine all across this state in need of help. And we know that black individuals and families make up 61 percent of the unhoused while making up only 14 percent of the overall population. So, this year, we created a racial equity roundtable on black homelessness, the only effort of this kind in the entire nation. To advance that work, I am proposing an additional \$50 million to attack the root causes of housing insecurity for black Illinoisans. And all the while, all the while we are going to continue to serve other at-risk populations like veterans and those who are medically vulnerable with the shelter and wraparound services they need. Underlying Home Illinois is a belief that this state values the dignity of human life and the universal right to a safe home. Not so with all states. 'I would build a wall of steel, a wall as high as Heaven, against the admission of a single one of those Southern Europeans who never thought the thoughts or spoke the language of a democracy in their lives.' Those words were spoken a hundred years ago by Georgia Governor Clifford Walker at a Ku Klux

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Klan rally. But the reality is, it could have been a social media post by Donald Trump last week. Time might march forward, but our society's worst impulses seem never to go away. I've spoken many times about my own family's refugee history. I will not join the chorus of people in this country or in this chamber who eagerly look to slam shut an immigration door that was once open to our ancestors. Over the last 18 months, more than 35 thousand asylum seekers have arrived in Illinois. Most of them landed here in buses sent by Governor Abbott of Texas. Abbott willfully planned the arrival of these individuals in locations and at times that would engender the maximum chaos for the City of Chicago and for the asylum seekers themselves. Children, pregnant women, and the elderly have been sent here in the dead of night, left far from our designated welcome centers, in freezing temperatures, wearing flip flops and T-shirts. Think about that the next time a politician from Texas wants to lecture you about being a good Christian. Our immigration system has been broken for a long time. No doubt, the current migrant crisis is a problem of the Federal Government's making, and I mean both political parties. I am sure that when I leave the podium today, there will be some who will walk outside this chamber, looking for a microphone so they can start yelling about sanctuary cities and immigrants taking our tax dollars. I hope that the press covering those statements will ask these politicians one important question: 'Did you or did you not support the federal immigration Bill that the White House agreed to with Senate Republicans?' There was a chance two weeks ago for a breakthrough on immigration policy. And

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the President and Congressional Democrats did what most voters say they want from leaders; they sat at a table with Republicans and negotiated a bipartisan compromise. The White House announced a Bill that was supported by top Republican Leadership in the Senate. And then within hours, hours, Republicans who had helped write the legislation announced that they were suddenly against the legislation. Including, most glaringly, every single Republican Member of the Illinois Congressional Delegation. Why did this happen? Why did every single Republican run away from something that they claimed they desperately want? Because Donald Trump told them to, and they're afraid of him. And why did Trump tell them to reject the Bill? Because he wanted to use the issue of immigration against President Biden in the November elections. I'm not making hyperbolic statements here. Donald Trump said that out loud. That Bill would have helped Illinois. It would have provided money and resources that we don't normally receive as a state far from the Southern border. Maybe some Republicans find it hard to put country over party. But our obligations to the people we represent supersede the letter after our names. Joe Biden has been a very good President who has rescued the economy and protected freedom. But states and cities, states and cities in the country's interior are not equipped alone to handle the rapid influx of new arrivals that we have seen. The White House and the Federal Government need to step up to coordinate and manage these asylum seekers when they cross the border. And they shouldn't leave it to the Governor of Texas who has no goal but to sow chaos and destruction. Listen, maybe some of

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you think that we should just say, 'this is not our problem,' and that we should let the migrant families starve or freeze to death. But that's not what decent Midwesterners do. That's not what leaders do. We didn't ask for this manufactured crisis, but we must deal with it all the same. With our partners in Cook County and the City of Chicago, my administration has worked to develop a cost effective and comprehensive response plan over the next 12 months. We used the most reliable data available and estimated what it would take to ensure that the most basic human needs are met for asylum seekers arriving in Chicago. This plan also includes continuing our efforts to divert as many people as possible away from temporary shelter to more permanent settlement, wherever that may be. Not because we are unwelcoming of immigrants, but because Chicago's shelter system is near capacity, and it is dangerous if migrants have no shelter or support at all. To date, we've moved 9 thousand individuals through the process, from arrival, to temporary shelter, to independent housing and self-sufficiency. Thousands of others have moved on to find family or sponsors. We've also helped thousands through the Temporary Protected Status and Employment Authorization process so they can legally work. Private industry in Illinois has expressed a strong desire to hire those who are authorized to work. I committed to the mayor of Chicago and the Cook County Board president that I would come to the General Assembly and ask for funding for a little over 50 percent of the cost of this plan, which comes to \$181.7 million. We don't have any clear idea how long Governor Abbott intends to hold the nation hostage, but his

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political stunt will eventually come to an end. So, let's start planning for its aftermath, ensuring that during the coming fiscal year, some of the 30 temporary migrant shelters can and ought to be converted to other productive uses, as determined by the communities themselves. Neighborhood clinics, community centers, workforce training, housing. There are lots of good ideas that I've heard from people, so we have designated \$5 million in this budget for shelter conversion grants. Now, I won't pretend any of this is easy, but it would be irresponsible to do anything but come here, lay out the scope of the challenge, tell you what I think we need to do, and then work with you to make it happen. Personally, I think each of us should follow the examples set by the good people of our state. Evanston's Mike Moyer is fixing up bicycles to donate to migrants. Chicago's Samantha Oulavong is teaching English to our new neighbors on a South Loop basketball court. And then there's Oak Park's Elaine Pierce. A retiree, Elaine opened her modest two-story, three-bedroom home to seven 'new family members,' as she would say, absorbing all of the costs on her own. Mike, Samantha, and Elaine are among the best of us, epitomizing what it means to be an Illinoisan through and through. Let's thank them today. Our FY25 budget proposal makes some hard choices. I wish we had big surpluses to work with this year to take on every one of the very real challenges that we face. It's important to note that, while this budget is tight this year, our fiscal house is in order, and we are able to keep our communities and our commitments to those communities and to the people of Illinois. This year's budget proposal is focused and

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disciplined. And because of the responsible actions we took in the last few years paying off state debt and treating federal pandemic relief as one-time revenue, we are not facing the budgetary challenges that other big states are this year. California, for example, has a \$38 billion deficit to contend with. Meanwhile, Illinois' budget is balanced, and it builds upon all of the progress that we've have made, paying our pensions in full, investing more in our public schools, social service agencies, and health care while addressing the immediate and unique needs of the coming fiscal year. Now, I expect that some of you will want to spend more, and some of you will claim that you want to spend less. I know this, and I'm always open to good ideas that Members of both parties have to more efficiently and effectively fulfill our obligations. My one line in the sand is that I will only sign a budget that is responsibly balanced and that does not diminish or derail the improving credit standing we have achieved for the last five years. Eighty years ago, in the middle of a world war, our state decided it wanted to preserve an important memento of our past. Governor Green knew that Illinoisans in every corner of the state were watching their family and friends and neighbors die half a world away fighting fascism. Good leaders are practical, but they also know the power of totems, especially virtuous ones. It's poetic and prophetic that it was children who came to the rescue in 1943 to enable the acquisition of one of Illinois' true jewels. Somehow, it's always our kids who know how to contextualize the past while reaching for our future. I'm struck by the words of Gene Rubley, that Springfield boy who

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gave up his movie money every week to donate to the Gettysburg Address effort. He noted, years later, 'It meant something to us, being part of something like that.' And it did mean something to Gene. It sparked a lifelong love of history. When he retired, Rubley worked as a docent at the Abraham Lincoln Museum, where on so many days, he delighted in showing visitors the document that he helped buy so many years ago. Gene's story and the generosity of Illinois' children in 1943 is a reminder of something important. Our citizens rightfully ask a great deal of their Representatives, but they are always willing to give so much of themselves in return. That reciprocal investment is the essence of statesmanship and citizenship. It's what makes a society strong. It is what has made Illinois great. Thank you. God bless you. God bless the great State of Illinois. And God bless the United States of America."

Speaker Welch: "Will the Committee of Escorts please come forward to escort the Governor from the chamber? President Harmon is recognized for a Motion. President Harmon is recognized for a Motion."

President Harmon: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Joint Session do now arise."

Speaker Welch: "President Harmon has moved that the Joint Session do now arise. All those in favor signify by saying 'aye'; all those opposed signify by saying 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Joint Session will now arise. The regular Session of the House will come to order."

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Speaker Manley: "Manley in the Chair. Members, please take your seats. Members, please be seated. Members. Members, please take your seats. Mr. Clerk, Committee Reports."

Clerk Hollman: "Committee Reports. Representative Gong-Gershowitz, Chairperson from the Committee on Judiciary - Civil reports the following committee action taken on February 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4226 and House Bill 4317. Representative Andrade, Chairperson from the Committee on Transportation: Vehicles & Safety reports the following committee action taken on February 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4365 and House Bill 4495. Representative Morgan, Chairperson from the Committee on Health Care Licenses reports the following committee action taken on February 21, 2024: do pass Short Debate is House Bill 4282. Introduction of Resolutions. House Resolution 616, offered by Representative Blair-Sherlock; and House Joint Resolution 58, offered by Representative Haas, are referred to the Rules Committee."

Speaker Manley: "Chair recognizes Leader Gordon-Booth. For what reason do you seek recognition?"

Gordon-Booth: "Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I have a gentleman in the gallery..."

Speaker Manley: "Leader. Leader, hold on. Let me... let me get order. Members, please. Members. Thank you. Go ahead, Leader."

Gordon-Booth: "Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a gentleman in the rear of the gallery by the name of Agbara Bryson. If he would please stand and be so gracious. He is the heir of a woman by the name of Annie Malone. Annie Malone was orphaned... was the

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orphaned daughter of a former slave and sharecropper. From her humble beginnings as a young hairstylist, she went on to create a giant health and beauty empire that spanned the world. Her Poro Company and the Poro College brought real job opportunities and economic progress to many tens of thousands of African Americans and other disadvantaged people. Annie Malone's hard work made her America's first black millionaire. While Annie reached unimagined levels of success, she never forgot where she came from, donating a large percentage of her profits to local charities. Among these, Annie supported a home for orphaned children that still exists today. Having never finished school, Annie was a strong supporter of education and she funded many scholarships for African American students to go to historically black colleges. Annie's strong faith in God led her to a life spent in service to others. Today, we are joined by Mr. James Agbara Bryson. Mr. Bryson, an award-winning educator, author, national trainer and life coach, he is also Annie Malone's great nephew. He was compelled to share Annie's story in the hope that her legacy might inspire others to hard work and follow their dreams. I would also like to add that Annie Malone was born and raised in my hometown of Peoria, Illinois."

Speaker Manley: "Welcome to Springfield, Mr. Bryson. Thank you, Leader. Chair recognizes Representative Slaughter."

Slaughter: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Every February for Black History Month, many of you know the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus has our annual caucus soiree. Tonight is the night. We are excited for this year's soiree. It's from 6:30 to 10 p.m.

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at the Abraham Lincoln Museum. This is an event that is always great, great food. We'll celebrate the African American diaspora and highlight the efforts of the ILBC. We are looking forward to seeing you tonight at the Black Caucus Soiree. Thank you, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Manley: "Thank you. Chair recognizes Representative Walsh. For what reason do you seek recognition?"

Walsh: "Purpose of announcement, Madam Speaker."

Speaker Manley: "Please proceed."

Walsh: "Ladies and Gentlemen of the House, the Illinois State Council of Machinists conference is taking place this week, and they have a legislative reception at the Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln Room. It's on the 2nd floor at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. All Legislators are invited, so if you have time from 5 to 7 tonight, please stop by and say hello to the machinists of Illinois. Thank you."

Speaker Manley: "And last but not least, the Chair recognizes Representative West."

West: "Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of personal privilege for our black history moment."

Speaker Manley: "Please proceed."

West: "Thank you so much. I rise in honor, as I do every year, to highlight Lewis Lemon. Once a slave, forever a founder, the founder of my city that I love, City of Rockford. Born a slave in North Carolina in the year 1812, like most child slaves, he did not have much hope for his future. But after 17 years, his life was about to change and his whole destiny as well. Lewis' master, Orrin D. Lemon, moved him to Alabama, and there he sold Lewis as a slave for life for about 450 bucks. This

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would equate to today's money of \$13 thousand. A businessman by the name of Germanicus Kent purchased young Lewis to most likely be a house servant. Lewis Lemon was then known as Lewis Kent, traditionally talking... taking the last name of the master. Shortly after purchasing Lewis, Kent's brother told Germanicus that Galena, Illinois is a place of opportunity. Germanicus Kent then decided to move to Illinois with his family and Lewis Lemon. Arriving in Galena, Kent and Lewis met a man by the name of Thatcher Blake. Blake and Kent grew into friends and decided to travel the Rock River Valley together. And in June of 1834, they had left Galena in a wagon and set off to Northern Wisconsin. They reached the Pecatonica River and brought a canoe and traveled the rest of the way on the river. Lewis was traveling with Kent and Blake and most likely doing much of the manual labor, like paddling the dugout canoe, considering he was the slave for Kent at the time. The men stopped at the junction of Pecatonica and Rock Rivers, reaching a small stream that is now known as Kent Creek, named after Germanicus Kent, and decided that this was the place to live and start this lumber mill. August 24, 1834, the men began the start of the City of Rockford. Lewis Lemon and Germanicus Kent had an agreement that Lewis would work for Kent until he had paid \$800 with a 10 percent interest for Lemon's freedom. It would take Lemon about six years and two months to earn enough money to pay for his life back. Lewis Lemon was a slave in Rockford, Illinois from May 1835 to September 1839, making him now a free man. Lewis Lemon is now recognized as one of the official three founders of the great City of Rockford, later having a local elementary school

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share the same name. Additional recognition for Lewis Lemon came to light when the eighth-grade class, in 1995, from Wilson Middle School discovered his empty gravesite and placed a gravestone reading 'Born a Slave-Died Free'. Lewis Lemon was once of an amazing story lost in history. I didn't learn about Lewis Lemon till I was a grown man. And so, I'm honored today to recognize a great leader for the City of Rockford who was born a slave, died free, Lewis Lemon. Thank you for your time."

Speaker Manley: "Chair recognizes Leader Buckner. For what reason do you seek recognition?"

Buckner: "Point of personal privilege, please."

Speaker Manley: "We cannot end today, Madam Speaker, without giving a very, very happy birthday to the calm, cool, collected, intellectual Dr. Theresa Mah. Happy birthday, Theresa."

Speaker Manley: "Happy birthday, Leader. Mr. Clerk, Agreed Resolutions."

Clerk Hollman: "Agreed Resolutions. House Resolution 614, offered by Representative Didech. And House Resolution 615, offered by Representative Gordon-Booth."

Speaker Manley: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of Agreed Resolutions. All those in favor say 'aye'; opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Agreed Resolutions are adopted. Mr. Clerk, please read the Adjournment Resolution."

Clerk Hollman: "Adjournment Resolution. House Joint Resolution #59, offered by Representative Gabel."

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RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that when the two Houses adjourn on Thursday, February 22, 2024, the House of Representatives stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 5, 2024, or to the call of the Speaker; and the Senate stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 5, 2024, or to the call of the President."

Speaker Manley: "Leader Gabel moves for the adoption of the Adjournment Resolution. All those in favor say 'aye'; opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the Adjournment Resolution is adopted. And now, allowing perfunctory time for the Clerk, Leader Gabel moves that the House stand adjourned until February 22, at the hour of noon. All those in favor say 'aye'; opposed say 'nay'. In the opinion of the Chair, the 'ayes' have it. And the House stands adjourned."

Clerk Hollman: "House Perfunctory Session will come to order. Introduction and First Reading of House Bills. House Bill 5669, offered by Representative Barbara Hernandez, a Bill for an Act concerning children. First Reading of this House Bill. There being no further business, the House Perfunctory Session will stand adjourned."