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For Immediate Release

**State Lawmakers Urged to Repeal Law that Reports
Student HIV/AIDS Status to Principals
*State House Committee Faces Votes Next Week***

CHICAGO – February 13, 2008 – Advocates are urging lawmakers to vote next week to repeal a 20-year old state law that requires the state public health department to report a student's HIV/AIDS status to school principals.

The Illinois House Human Services Committee faces a vote next week on legislation, House Bill 4314, which seeks to repeal the state mandate that requires the Illinois Department of Public Health or local health departments to report the name of an HIV-positive child to the principal of the child's school.

"Fear that a student's HIV status would be disclosed to principals deters students from being tested for HIV and risks further spread of the disease," said Cathy Krieger, President & CEO of The Children's Place Association whose organization, a Chicago-based child welfare agency specializing in HIV/AIDS children and family care, is leading the repeal effort in Springfield.

The legislature originally approved the principal notification law in 1987 when the sources of HIV/AIDS transmission were largely unknown.

"In 1987, fear—not medical science—drove the school principal notification law," said Krieger. "Proponents at the time feared routine school activities could trigger HIV transmission; today, we know that is false."

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Illinois is one of only five states that mandate disclosure of the pupil's HIV status to any school official [1], and Illinois alone mandates disclosure to the school principal, according to Krieger.

“The principal notification law is a barrier to testing and a legislative relic from an era when governments passed HIV/AIDS-related laws grounded in ignorance and fear versus fact,” said State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, the chief sponsor of the repeal legislation.

On Nov. 9, 2007, Feigenholtz participated in a forum, hosted by The Children's Place Association, which centered on HIV/AIDS and Illinois adolescents in which the principal notification law surfaced.

At that forum, The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) released data that shows a 60 percent increase in Illinois HIV infections among youths under the age of 24—with a 100 percent increase among males alone—since 2000.

“The surging infections among youth is proof we need to eliminate barriers to testing, like the principal notification law, if we are to slow the disease's spread amongst youth,” Krieger. The House Human Services Committee will meet to consider the legislation in Room D-1 of the Stratton Office Building in Springfield on Thursday, February 21, 2008 at 8:30 a.m.

[1] Other states are Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Nevada.

About The Children's Place Association

The mission of The Children's Place Association is to improve the present and secure the future for children, youth and families confronted by HIV/AIDS or other life-changing health conditions. Founded in 1991, The Children's Place Association serves as a safe haven for children whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS through the Residential Center and Early Learning Center as well as Family & Community Services and Foster Care & Adoption programs. For more information on programs and services, visit www.childrens-place.org or call 773-826-1230.

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