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**For Immediate Release**

## **State House Panel Votes to Repeal Law that Reports Student HIV/AIDS Status to Principals**

**CHICAGO – February 21, 2008** – The Illinois House Human Services Committee voted, 7-1, today to approve legislation 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. I applaud the committee's vote," said Cathy Krieger, president and CEO of The Children's Place Association.

The 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."

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.

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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 legislation, House Bill 4314, now moves to the full House for consideration.

### **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](http://www.childrens-place.org) or call 773-826-1230.

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