

# News...

FROM STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD



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**For More Information:**

RepFord@LaShawnFord.com

773-416-4663

## Ford Helps Secure \$9 Million for College Mental Health Services

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill.** – Campus mental health services are in line to receive \$9 million in additional state funding this year following the advocacy of state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chicago, Young Invincibles and other advocates.

“Fighting with NAMI Chicago and students to secure funding for mental health services at public universities was a success,” Ford said. “This funding will help make campuses healthier and safer. I’m confident that NAMI and all of their partners will bring long overdue mental health services to students so they can achieve and be all they are meant to be.”

Ford, who has served as chair of the House Appropriations-Higher Education Committee, has been a long-time supporter of increased mental health funding on college campuses. This past week he advocated for and helped secure a \$9 million appropriation (via House Bill 969) that funds the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act for the remainder of fiscal year 2023.

The Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, which impacts public two- and four-year colleges and universities, aims to:

- Further identify students with mental health needs and connect them to services,
- Increase access to support services on college campuses,
- Increase access to clinical mental health services on college campuses and in the surrounding communities for college students,
- Empower students through peer-to-peer support and training in identifying mental health needs and resources, and
- Reduce administrative policies that put an undue burden on students seeking leave for their mental health conditions through technical assistance and training.

According to NAMI Chicago, the number of college students diagnosed with a mental health condition has risen, yet only about 25% of students receive treatment. Students with mental health conditions have lower graduation rates, particularly for Black, Latino and low-income students who face higher dropout rates.

“We know that students can and do face significant pressures that would be helped with clear access to mental health services,” Ford said. “I believe that we’re only just starting to appreciate the importance of these services, and that we need to continue to prioritize investment. This funding is an important step, but more work remains.”

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