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PRESS RELEASE

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Pritzker Administration to Expand Benefit Opportunities to more Seniors in 2020

Adjustments made in income eligibility allow more people to qualify for benefits

Springfield - Starting January 1, 2020, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) will implement new annual income limits, making it possible for more individuals to qualify for the Secretary of State License Plate Discount, Seniors Ride Free Transit Benefit, and Persons with Disabilities Free Transit Ride.

"Taking care of Illinois' most vulnerable seniors is at the core of our values, and working with the General Assembly, we expanded services to even more vulnerable older adults," said Governor JB Pritzker. "I'm proud that Illinois is moving forward and restoring key services, and assistance for seniors means that they won't be forgotten."

"I would like to thank Governor Pritzker and the Illinois General Assembly for truly *respecting yesterday, supporting today, and planning for tomorrow* by raising the income eligibility limitations on this program," said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. "These benefits support some of our state's most vulnerable residents by assisting them in their transportation needs, so we are proud to announce that more individuals will be able to take advantage of this program."

Specifically, as part of the bipartisan budget implementation bill, SB 1814, which was passed in May by the General Assembly and signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker in June, it will now be easier for some to receive benefits from the Benefit Access Program, the formal name of the program that includes the Secretary of State License Plate Discount, Seniors Ride Free Transit Benefit, and Persons with Disabilities Free Transit Ride. Any application submitted January 1, 2020 through April 15, 2020 will continue to use 2018 income but will be subjected to the new income limits. Applications submitted on or after April 16, 2020 must use 2019 income to file. Therefore, if an applicant applied in 2019 and was denied based on 2018 income using the current income limits, they will be afforded an opportunity to re-apply. Once approved, benefits are valid for two years.

For Applications Submitted:

	Before January 1, 2020	On or After January 1, 2020
Households containing one person	less than \$27,610	less than \$33,562
Households containing two persons	less than \$36,635	less than \$44,533
Households containing three or more persons	less than \$45,657	less than \$55,500

--more--

Respect for yesterday. Support for today. Planning for tomorrow.
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

The increase in income eligibility limitations reflect the annual cost of living adjustment in Social Security and supplemental security income benefits. The average annual Social Security income in Illinois is \$17,470/year. Without Social Security, it is estimated that an additional 36% of older Illinoisans would fall into poverty. There has not been an increase in income eligibility limitations in the Benefit Access Program since 2010.

In Fiscal Year 2019, the department received over 126,180 applications, compared to 75,288 applications in 2006, which was the first year IDoA had made the application available online.

To be determined eligible for these benefits, individuals must submit a Benefit Access Application online. Visit our website, www.illinois.gov/aging, and click on the "Benefit Access" tab near the top. Paper applications are not available. Individuals who don't have access to a computer are encouraged to contact their local Area Agency on Aging, visit a local senior center, public library, or community center. For assistance locating your Area Agency on Aging or a local senior center, please call the **IDoA Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 (hearing impaired call 1-888-206-1327)**.

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