

**For Immediate Release**

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## **IDHS Launches New Pilot to Provide Fresh Produce to Communities on the South Side of Chicago**

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) announced today a new Community Garden Pilot Project to provide fresh produce to communities on the south side of Chicago that have a history of poverty and that have been hardest hit by COVID-19.

“We are excited to announce this great new pilot program and to offer fresh produce to some of the areas hardest hit by COVID-19 and poverty in Illinois,” said IDHS Secretary Grace Hou. “Fresh produce is an extremely important part of a healthy, long-term diet and even more so during a global pandemic. We hope to continue to build this program into additional underserved communities in the future.”

Antioch Haven Homes, located in the Englewood area of Chicago is the first site that will participate in the Community Garden Pilot Project. The fresh produce is being grown in the gardens on the property of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church's Antioch Haven Homes.

“As the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, we identified the need for increased access to healthy foods in areas where food insecurity is prevalent and grocery stores are scarce,” said Senate Majority Leader Kimberly A. Lightford (D-Maywood). “Our vision was to implement a program that would provide fresh produce grown right in our neediest communities. I’m grateful to IDHS and the many organizations working to implement this program.”

Broccoli, collard greens, curly kale, and stonehead cabbage will serve the residents of the 197 affordable housing units in Antioch Haven Homes. Antioch Missionary Baptist Church also plans to expand their community gardens to include all of their 600 units that serve over 1200 individuals.

“Englewood has a rich history of community gardening and is a worldwide leader in urban agriculture,” Rep. Sonya Harper (D-Chicago). “As a longtime advocate for eliminating food deserts and creating local healthy food systems I am happy to see the state investing in our local solutions to improve healthy food access for all.”

Additional participating organizations include Fernwood Community Outreach Church, Great True Vine Baptist Church (The Laura B. Collins Community Development Center), Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) and Trinity United Church (Endeleo Institute). The organizations are partnering with the Chicago Community Gardens Association during the pilot program to provide technical assistance and farming products. The Chicago Community Gardens Association will continue their partnership with the organizations after the pilot program concludes in December 2020. All organizations will also be partnered with the Cook County Farm Bureau to apply for their annual Cookfresh Community Urban Garden Grant Program next year.

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