Governor Pritzker Proclaims the Month of October as Cyber Awareness Month in Illinois

Springfield, IL - Illinois Governor Pritzker is proclaiming the month of October as Cyber Awareness Month in Illinois to recognize the vital role cybersecurity plays in public safety and the importance of helping Illinoisans to be more aware to avoid cyber-attacks.

Cybersecurity Awareness Month was originally launched by the National Cyber Security Alliance and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in October 2004 as a broad effort to help all Americans stay safer and more secure online. The program was quickly adopted by states and other entities to spread awareness and individualize the message.

"The scale and sophistication of cyber threats continue to increase, requiring constant review and strengthening of defense strategies and an awareness of how to protect online activities," **said Jennifer Ricker, Illinois CIO and Acting Secretary for the Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT)**. "It is critical that we all stay vigilant in our digital interactions and utilize information security best practices to lessen the risk of becoming a cyber victim."

"Malicious cyber activity threatens the public's safety and our economic security," **said Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau**. "Taking the right security measures and being alert and aware when online are key ways to prevent cyber intrusions and online crimes. This month, we encourage all Illinoisans to arm yourself with information about the risks and learn about the steps you can take to reduce the chances of being a victim of cybercrime."

During the month of October, the State of Illinois will conduct an employee outreach campaign to educate staff on ways to strengthen email security. Additionally, resources for staying safe online are available at Stay Safe Online, including the tips below from the National Cybersecurity Alliance.

> **When in doubt, throw it out**: Links in email, tweets, posts and online advertising are often how cybercriminals try to compromise your information. If it looks suspicious, even if you know the source, it's best to delete or – if appropriate – mark it as junk.

> **Think before you act**: Be wary of communications that implores you to act immediately, offers something that sounds too good to be true or asks for personal information.

Make your passphrase a sentence: A strong passphrase is a sentence that is at least 12 characters long. Focus on sentences or phrases that you like to think about and are easy to remember. On many sites, you can even use spaces.

Unique account, unique passphrase: Having separate passphrases for every account helps to thwart cybercriminals. At a minimum, separate your work and personal accounts and make sure that your critical accounts have the strongest passphrases.

Lock down your login: Fortify your online accounts by enabling the strongest authentication tools available, such as, multi-factor authentication or a unique one-time code through an app on your mobile device. Your usernames and passphrases are not enough to protect key accounts like email, banking and social media.

Link here to Governor Pritzker's proclamation on Cyber Awareness Month in Illinois.

###