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**Gov. Pritzker Appoints Quiwana Bell as Assistant Secretary of
Firearm Violence Prevention**

SPRINGFIELD - Further bolstering Illinois' commitment to ending firearm violence, Governor JB Pritzker today announced new leadership for the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention (OFVP), a statewide initiative housed within the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).

"It's my pleasure to appoint Quiwana Bell as Assistant Secretary of Firearm Violence Prevention," **said Governor JB Pritzker.** "As Chief Development Officer at Westside Health Authority, Quiwana grew the organization's capacity exponentially during her tenure—now serving 15,000 people a year through re-entry, youth development, and crisis intervention programs. She's a pillar of the community, and her work to prevent violence in Illinois is more than a professional experience – it's her personal calling."

The OFVP was established as part of the Reimagine Public Safety Act (RPSA), which was signed into law by Gov. Pritzker in 2021. The Act calls for a comprehensive approach to reducing firearm violence through community investments to address root causes and provide those most at-risk with access to evidence-based and trauma-informed services.

"As we say in restorative justice spaces, 'the wisdom is in the room,' meaning those closest to the problems, are often closest to the solutions," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** "I have the privilege of leading the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity (JEO) Initiative and welcome Quiwana Bell in her new role. Governor Pritzker and I look forward to working in partnership with Quiwana and the OFVP to address trauma and other harmful effects that gun violence has on communities throughout the state."

The Office, which has been funding violence prevention programming since early 2022, is working to reduce firearm violence rates across Illinois, while improving access to education, employment, and other critical services for communities with the highest rates of violence. The OFVP has committed over \$215 million in funding to 170 community-based organizations across Illinois who are doing this critical work.

Of the RPSA communities with the highest rates of firearm victimization during January through June of 2022, 80% have seen declines in 2023.

“I am deeply grateful that Quiwana Bell will soon take leadership of our efforts to address this ongoing and challenging public health crisis,” **said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.** “She will bring a wealth of wisdom to the table and help IDHS and the State gain ground in the fight to end gun violence in Chicago and throughout Illinois.”

Bell steps into the role of Assistant Secretary of Firearm Violence Prevention on October 1. Previously, she was the Chief Development Officer for the Westside Health Authority, a non-profit community development organization serving the residents of Chicago’s Austin, East and West Garfield Park, and Lawndale neighborhoods.

“It’s a great honor to have the opportunity to lead this office in the critical task of combatting firearm violence in Illinois and to build on the success it’s already created in connecting with historically disinvested communities,” **said incoming Assistant Secretary of Firearm Violence Prevention, Quiwana Bell.** “I look forward to working with communities across Illinois to form comprehensive, innovative, and inclusive solutions to reduce the trauma and loss experienced from gun violence and to enhance public safety and overall well-being.”

“I am looking forward to partnering with Ms. Bell in her new role as the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention to address the root causes of gun violence as a public health issue, which requires a comprehensive approach and long-term investment in the generational healing and wellness of Black and Brown communities across Illinois,” **said State Senator Robert Peters (D-Chicago).**

“I am excited to collaborate with Ms. Bell to uplift and invest in communities across Illinois that are disproportionately impacted by gun violence,” **said State Representative Justin Slaughter (D-Chicago).** “Together, we will continue to work to reimagine what public safety means in Illinois, invest in our youth, and promote healing and restoration for families and communities.”

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