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COALITION OF ILLINOIS YWCA ORGANIZATIONS LAUNCH STATEWIDE POLICY COUNCIL FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

SPRINGFIELD, IL - In recognition of Women's History Month, local YWCA associations from across the state of Illinois have come together to create a statewide policy council.

"YWCA has been working on behalf of women and their families for over a century, making us the oldest women's organization in the nation," stated Dorri McWhorter, CEO of YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, the organization spearheading the effort. "In an era where women's issues are finally getting the attention they deserve, our goal through this policy council is to amplify the collective voices of hundreds of thousands of women who are served by Illinois YWCA associations."

In Illinois today, women and families are struggling to keep pace. Budget shortfalls, unemployment and underemployment, sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace, the lack of quality affordable childcare, domestic and community violence, and other factors mean the work of the YWCA is as critical as ever before.

"We cannot stand on the sidelines," stated Dontae Latson, President and CEO of YWCA-McLean County. "With the potential for yet another budget crisis in Illinois, we must come together to advocate on behalf of our communities because when budgets are not passed, women and families suffer the most."

The YWCA Illinois Policy Council will be a mechanism to bring diverse voices to the policy table. Besides its racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity, YWCA organizations also reach younger women who are eager to engage and advocate.

"The women we serve, both within the university and in the larger Urbana-Champaign community, are fired up and ready to advocate for themselves and others," stated Andrea Rundell, Executive Director of the YWCA-University of Illinois. "To be able to work collectively across the state on policies that matter to all of us is a powerful opportunity that we are eager to support."

There are fifteen YWCA local associations in Illinois that share a national mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. Each association offers a unique set of programs and services relevant to its specific community in fulfillment of this mission. Local YWCA affiliates are often the largest providers of childcare services, rape crisis support, and economic empowerment services in their regions. Their work is supported not only by paid staff, but also by extensive volunteer networks.

Affiliates that have joined the statewide coalition are: Alton, Canton, Chicago Metropolitan, Elgin, Evanston-North Shore, Kankakee, Lake County, McLean County (which includes Bloomington-Normal), Northwestern Illinois (which includes Rockford), Pekin, Quad Cities, Sauk Valley, and University of Illinois.

About YWCA USA

YWCA USA is one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation, serving over 2 million women, girls, and their families. YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 150 years — from voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to health care reform. Today, we combine programming and advocacy in order to generate institutional change in three key areas: racial justice and civil rights, empowerment and economic advancement of women and girls, and health and safety of women and girls. Learn more: www.ywca.org. YWCA USA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 150 years — from voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to health care reform. Today, we combine programming and advocacy in order to generate institutional change in three key areas: racial justice and civil rights, empowerment and economic advancement of women and girls, and health and safety of women and girls. Learn more: www.ywca.org.