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Michael Reese Health Trust launches the Prairie State Access Fund

New pooled fund will support ongoing reproductive & sexual health work in Chicago and across Illinois

Prairie Fund will release its first Request for Proposals today

CHICAGO, IL – Today, Michael Reese Health Trust, in partnership with the Office of the Governor, has officially launched the Prairie State Access Fund, a new initiative of Michael Reese Health Trust created to sustain and strengthen the reproductive health ecosystem in Illinois to ensure access for all.

As one of the few states in the Midwest protecting the right to comprehensive reproductive healthcare, Illinois plays a critical role in meeting needs for both “the patient” and “the clinic.” Prairie State Access Fund will connect donor support with organizations protecting and expanding reproductive health access in Chicago and across Illinois. Prairie Fund will provide flexible funding so they can act fast, close urgent gaps, and deliver care with dignity. Grounded in equity and reproductive justice, Prairie Fund will help maintain Illinois’ status as a safe and dependable refuge for reproductive health.

“Illinois is now serving nearly one in four people nationwide who must travel for reproductive and sexual healthcare, placing unprecedented strain on providers and communities across our state,” **said Ameya Pawar, President & CEO of Michael Reese Health Trust.** “The Prairie State Access Fund was created to meet this moment by delivering the flexible, pooled support organizations need to sustain care and respond in real time.”

“The Trump Administration is leading an all-out assault on abortion and gender affirming care – but Illinois will not let that happen here. In the face of the anti-woman, anti-LGBTQ campaign being waged by extremists, Illinois has taken a leading role in protecting individual freedom and autonomy,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “The Prairie State Access Fund is an example of true public and private sector partnership in building a more connected and resourced reproductive health ecosystem. Together, we are sending a clear message in our state and across the country: Illinois trusts women to make their own medical decisions.”

“Reproductive rights are under attack across the country; this fund will help make sure Illinois remains the safe haven it is today,” said **Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton.** “For a lot of people, the services provided by this investment will be a sign of hope — hope that safe, dignified treatment is out there. No matter who you are or where you are from, you are welcome in Illinois, and we’ll make sure you get the care you need.”

“As demand for reproductive healthcare in Illinois grows, close collaboration across this landscape is vital to strengthening our infrastructure and ensuring we can continue to push back against efforts to decrease access to care,” **said Elizabeth M. Whitehorn, Director, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.** “The Prairie State Access Fund will complement our work in the Medicaid program and with our sister agencies to support the providers and community-based organizations who are on the frontlines serving patients.”

“Reproductive health is critical to a community’s public health,” **said Dr. Sameer Vohra, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health.** “Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, Illinois has become a national leader in protecting access to reproductive health care services. Today’s announcement only

furthering our efforts. I am thankful for the investment and leadership of the Michael Reese Health Trust and the Prairie Fund Steering Committee, ensuring reproductive health organizations have resources to remain stable and responsive to family and community needs.”

“Repro TLC is honored to support the launch of Prairie State Access Fund,” **said Latona Giwa, RN, BSN, IBCLC, Executive Director of Repro TLC.** “We welcome this vital support to further strengthen our efforts to remove financial and logistical barriers and connect learners to the clinical training and education they need to expand access to gender-affirming and patient-centered sexual and reproductive health care. Building upon a 20-year history of training in Illinois, we are thankful for this opportunity to collaborate with partners to advance the next generation of care providers.”

“Illinois is a safe haven for care thanks to the strong commitment of Governor Pritzker and partners like the Michael Reese Health Trust,” **said Adrienne White-Faines, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Illinois.** “Illinois has the highest volume of out-of-state abortion care patients in the nation. Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) continues to see patients from 48 states, while also expanding access statewide to the full scope of sexual and reproductive services, including gender affirming care. PPIL is proud to stand with our partners as a trusted leader in the commitment to health care access and equity for all.”

“Illinois is serving people from across the country who have nowhere else to turn, making this a national responsibility and a national opportunity. I’m proud to support the Prairie State Access Fund and encourage donors everywhere to invest in the infrastructure that makes access possible,” **said Heather Steans, Member of the Prairie Fund Steering Committee.**

“Michael Reese Health Trust has been a passion project for me because it is inseparable from my life’s work. I was trained at Michael Reese Hospital and practiced there for 11 years, where caring for women facing life-threatening pregnancy complications and ensuring access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare was part of its legacy - and it shaped my belief that access to care is not optional, it is essential,” **said Dr. Edward Linn, Michael Reese Health Trust board member.** “For over more than four decades as a reproductive health physician, I have counseled countless patients whose pregnancies were deeply wanted but put their lives at risk. The Prairie State Access Fund reflects what clinicians know to be true: protecting reproductive healthcare is about safeguarding lives, dignity, and medically necessary care.”

“Illinois providers and CAF are playing an outsized role in the national abortion landscape, and sustaining that role requires flexible, additive support,” **said Megan Jeyifo, Executive Director of the Chicago Abortion Fund.** “The Prairie State Access Fund strengthens a constellation of care that has been meeting this moment for years and reinforces the networks patients rely on to access abortion with dignity and compassion.”

“The Red Tent Fund is a national abortion fund, rooted in Jewish values, that affirms the right to abortion for all and provides direct funding to patients seeking care at independent clinics across the country. We’re proud to stand with the Prairie State Access Fund in a shared commitment to health equity and access for all Illinois communities and beyond. Together, we are strengthening the ecosystem of care in a state that has become a lifeline for abortion seekers across the nation,” **said Allison Tombros Korman, Founder and Executive Director, Red Tent Fund.**

In conjunction with today’s launch, Prairie Fund is releasing its first Request for Proposals (RFP) to a selection of prospective grantees across Illinois. The initial RFP will support the financial stability and operational continuity of sexual and reproductive health organizations, sustain access to comprehensive care, protect critical infrastructure, and strengthen trusted referral networks that connect people to accurate information and services. To learn more about the Prairie State Access Fund, [click here](#).

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About Michael Reese Health Trust

Michael Reese partners with the Chicagoland community to advance and advocate for lasting health solutions. We do this by carrying forward the vision of Michael Reese Hospital's Jewish founders and the generations of philanthropic leadership they inspired. We envision a future where every community has the resources needed to be a healthy and safe place for people to live, learn, work and play.