My name is Nadeen Israel and I am the Policy Director at EverThrive Illinois. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony today.

For those of you not familiar with us, EverThrive Illinois is a non-profit organization that has worked relentlessly over the past 30 years to improve the health of Illinois women, children, adolescents and families. This work includes policy advocacy, training & technical assistance, and outreach & education. We view health and well-being from a comprehensive lens that includes physical, mental, oral, and overall community and public health.

While the Governor’s FY19 proposed budget seems to include less severe cuts than in previous years, it still continues the theme of additional proposed cuts to health and human services, attempting once again to balance the budget on the shoulders of those who can least afford it. We are very disappointed to see that this proposed budget relies on a roll-back of the state income tax and does not address the state’s ~$8.8 billion backlog of unpaid bills. In addition, if the assumption in this proposed budget that the general assembly will approve a $1.2 billion supplemental funding bill for this current fiscal year (FY18) does not materialize, then that is another $1.2 billion that must be accounted for in order to pass a balanced FY19 state budget.

EverThrive Illinois believes every Illinoisan deserves the opportunity to live their healthiest lives. We know that our work towards realizing this vision must include steps to eliminate health disparities and inequities. The Governor’s FY19 proposed budget does not come close, and in fact takes us steps backwards, in realizing this vision for our children, youth, women and families. Governor Rauner should go back to the drawing board and revise his proposed budget to remove the cuts currently being proposed in a variety of health and human service programs, including the 4% provider rate cut ($150 million reduction) in the IL Medicaid program. This proposed cut comes at a time when we are fighting the battle of our lives against federal attacks to the Medicaid program and advocating around-the-clock to save and protect this program for the 3.2 million Illinoisans - of which at least two-thirds are women and children - who rely on it for their healthcare.

Today, we are calling on Governor Rauner to work with the general assembly and instead of cuts, support strong and smart investments in the health and human service programs that our families and communities rely on, including Medicaid. Additionally, in order for our state to move forward, adequate and sustainable
revenue is critical. That is why EverThrive IL supports the Fair Tax Now campaign. This campaign is being led by the Responsible Budget Coalition (RBC), of which EverThrive IL is a proud member. The Fair Tax Now campaign is a statewide effort to put a fair tax on the ballot in 2018. A Fair Tax could raise $2 billion a year while providing tax relief for over 90% of Illinois tax payers. We strongly believe the fair tax is an essential step towards a long-term and permanent solution to address Illinois’ on-going fiscal crisis and to truly begin to support the health and well-being of our families and communities.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit this written testimony today. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or would like to speak further.

Sincerely,

Nadeen Israel
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