

From the Comptroller—

I am excited to announce the relaunch of *Fiscal Focus*, a periodic magazine offering key state fiscal facts and in-depth articles about timely issues, as part of the ongoing transparency efforts of the Comptroller's Office.

As Comptroller, I have worked to make this office more open than ever before. My Transparency Revolution has resulted in several new laws that opened the books on state government, so taxpayers and policymakers can have a better awareness of the fiscal challenges the state faces.

Thanks to the Debt Transparency Act (DTA), my office now offers monthly reporting on the state's bill backlog. Before the DTA, the public had no way of knowing how much Illinois actually owes in overdue bills because state agencies didn't disclose what bills they had on hand.

The monthly reports required under the DTA also revealed, for the first time, that the budget impasse cost taxpayers over \$1 billion in late payment interest penalties. The reports have been cited by lawmakers and both the current and previous administrations as a crucial source of fiscal information as they craft a state budget. You can find the DTA reports at <https://illinoiscomptroller.gov/DTA>.

In addition to the DTA, I championed new laws that require governors to budget for late payment interest penalties and to pay their staff members from the appropriations for their own offices, instead of offshoring them onto the budgets of state agencies.

The return of *Fiscal Focus* is a natural continuation of this Transparency Revolution. While Illinois comptrollers began issuing regular fiscal reports from the office's earliest days in the 1970s, the publication of *Fiscal Focus* started under former Comptroller Loleta Didrickson's administration in 1995 and continued under comptrollers Dan Hynes and Judy Baar Topinka, but lapsed before I took office.

The renewed *Fiscal Focus* will highlight some of the transparency information my office collects, inform readers on important policy topics and keep them up-to-date on developments at the Comptroller's Office.

This issue of *Fiscal Focus* provides comparisons of our state's minimum wage with the minimum wages in other states; highlights the interactive Public Accountability Report, a new transparency tool from the Comptroller's Office; and offers an in-depth look at Illinois' shift to using managed care organizations to administer the state's Medicaid program, which is one of the largest areas of spending in state government.

In fiscal year 2010, less than 3% of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services' spending on care for the year went to managed care organizations. In fiscal year 2019, it is estimated that number will grow to more than 70% of care expenditures. This substantial shift has implications for transparency, care for some of Illinois' most vulnerable residents, and the state's overall health care system.

As I've traveled Illinois, meeting with state vendors who suffered through sparse or no payments during the two-year budget impasse, I heard from them what a hardship that is as they try to keep their doors open. I've offered what help my office can provide: in some cases, advancing funds so an organization would not miss payroll, and employees could stay on the job.

I've also worked to elevate these stories, so people know the state's bill backlog, which stands at \$6.162 billion at the time of publication, isn't just a number on a spreadsheet. It has a real impact on people's lives and on businesses throughout our state. I plan to use *Fiscal Focus* to highlight some of those stories.

I hope you find *Fiscal Focus* useful and informative. Your comments about this and other publications from this office are always welcome. You can contact us at 800-877-8078 or info@illinoiscomptroller.gov.

You can also provide feedback through social media. You can find the Office of the Comptroller on Facebook: [@ILComptroller](https://www.facebook.com/ILComptroller), Twitter: [@ILComptroller](https://twitter.com/ILComptroller), and Instagram: [@ilcomptroller](https://www.instagram.com/ilcomptroller).



Susana A. Mendoza
Illinois State Comptroller

