

My name is Veronica Williams and I am a Certified Surgical Tech at Stroger Hospital and member of SEIU Local 73. I'm here today to testify about agency staffing and its impact on the Cook County Hospital System. Last month, Cook County Health said the volume of agency staffing is decreasing. But, our research shows that isn't the case.

Local 73 looked at agency spending from 2017 – 2023 and found a significant increase. Agency spending remained below \$50 million between 2017 – 2020. In 2021, agency spending rose to \$100 million, then spending skyrocketed to \$200 million in 2022. Our research shows that CCH has spent \$150 million this year, through May 2023. If this trend continues, CCH is on track to outspend 2022 levels.

As CCH pours millions into agency staffing, positions in the CCH system remain vacant and full-time employees are left to pick up extra tasks. Cook County workers care about our patients and the work that we do. But, an agency-heavy workforce hurts the quality of care that we can give our patients. In addition to being short-staffed, full-time workers will often have to help agency staff while still being responsible for normal job duties.

Instead of relying on band-aid solutions like outsourcing, CCH must find solutions to address the staffing crisis. CCH workers are struggling to provide quality services to our patients and the underserved communities that come through our door every day. CCH investing in its full-time staff would make a significant difference in our ability to do our jobs.