

Good Morning, Everyone

Thank you President Preckwinkle for selecting me as the nominee to be the next Public Defender of Cook County. If confirmed, I will be the tenth Public Defender of Cook County since the office was established in 1930. If confirmed, I will be the second woman in 85 years to lead the second largest Public Defense Law Office in the Country.

There are several pressing issues that I will be focusing on if I am confirmed as the next Public Defender. First, reasonable bonds for all our clients will be a top priority. When our clients sit in jail day after day awaiting trial, they suffer in many ways: they lose jobs; treatment for a drug addiction or mental illness is interrupted and their conditions deteriorate; their loved ones suffer without them at home, and our community pays a high price for this incarceration. I will collaborate with other Criminal Justice stakeholders to put forth evidence at the bond hearing to aid the judiciary in setting fair and reasonable bonds.

Second, all children are children. They all deserve fairness and justice. I will work with the President and legislators to end the practice of prosecuting our children as adults in a Court of Law. I will collaborate with anyone who wants to help change laws that take away judicial discretion which not only treats children as adults unfairly, but also mandates severe penalties for adults charged with certain offenses with no thought to rehabilitation. The end result of these mandatory minimum sentencing laws has been to fill up our prisons and cost my clients their lives and takes away their hope.

Thirdly, proactive community outreach is another priority that will be my focus. So many people in our community are not clear on the duties and responsibilities of the Public Defender. I intend on educating our young people both about their rights under the law, and about the laws that can affect their lives. My goal is to prevent them

from coming into the Criminal Justice System. I want to reach out to families who are involved in our courts, to help them navigate through the system, and be a resource for them.

Fourth, I want to expand our Therapeutic courts. I want to continue to change the narrative - mental illness is not a Criminal Justice issue, it is a public health issue. Drug addiction is not a Criminal Justice issue, it is a public health issue. I will work closely with the President, all of you, and other stakeholders in the Criminal Justice System to divert non-violent offenders into treatment that heals, reduces recidivism, and helps my clients become productive members of our community.

Lastly, the Public Defender's Office has more than 100 attorneys with less than 5 years' experience. These are the litigators and leaders of the future. To ensure the best representation for our clients, attorneys need consistent training in the areas of trial advocacy, negotiation, developments in the law, and sentencing skills. My goal is to inject new energy into our training program and broaden the number of programs we offer to our staff.

I will fulfill the trust placed in me by the President. I will meet the demand imposed by the Mission Statement of this office: to protect the fundamental rights, liberties, and dignity of each person whose case has been entrusted to me, the Public Defender, by providing the finest legal representation. I follow the large footsteps of Public Defenders who preceded me, but I hope to honor the work done by all of them. Thank you.