CHICAGO COMMUNITY BOND FUND

Testimony of Chicago Community Bond Fund in Strong Support of Proposed Resolution "Justice For Black Lives" (Agenda Item #20-2867)

Chicago Community Bond Fund has been operating a revolving community bail fund in Cook County since 2015. As of today, CCBF has paid more than two million dollars in bond to secure the pretrial freedom of 429 people. Since 2016, we have worked with our partners in the Coalition to End Money Bond to lead advocacy efforts to dramatically decrease pretrial incarceration first in Cook County and now alongside partners across Illinois. These organizing efforts have reduced the number of people incarcerated in Cook County Jail to a 30 year low. We are submitting this statement in support of the "Justice for Black Lives" resolution proposed by Commissioner Brandon Johnson.

Every year, tens of thousands of people are incarcerated in Cook Jail while awaiting trial. These people have not been convicted of a crime and many are caged simply because they can't afford to pay a money bond. The presumption of innocence our justice system is supposedly built appears a mere farce from the perspective of these people inside a jail cell. Many of them are trapped in Cook County Jail for months and sometimes even years while awaiting trial.

Even just a few days in jail can lead to the loss of one's job, family, or housing. Additionally, pretrial incarceration results in higher rates of conviction, longer jail and prison sentences, and increases the likelihood of future arrests. The harm caused to individuals incarcerated in Cook County Jail ripples out and impacts our entire county, making us all less safe.

The call to "defund the police" has echoed across the country in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests held in response to the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Talyor, Tony McDade and far too many others. Jurisdictions of all sizes are reevaluating the role that law enforcement plays in our communities. In many instances, governments are taking dramatic steps to try to address the harms our criminal legal system causes to Black and Brown communities. The Cook County Board of Commissioners should also be reevaluating the county's budget priorities and the millions of dollars it spends on policing, criminalization, and incarceration.

Cook County spends more than $600 million each year supporting a racist system of policing and incarceration through the Cook County Sheriff's budget, which includes Sheriff's police, the Cook County Jail, and more. Seventy five percent of the people incarcerated in the jail are Black even though Black people only make up 25% of Cook County's population. **The number of people in Cook County Jail has dropped by more than 50% since 2013. In that time, the budget for the jail has actually increased by 26%. If the jail budget had gone down**

proportionally to the number of people locked up, we would have $117 million more for other public services in our County.

The historic decline in the number of people in Cook County Jail should coincide with a similar decrease in the Sheriff's budget. Instead of being reallocated within the Sheriff's budget, these funds must be redirected toward services benefitting Cook County's most marginalized residents. Righting the wrongs of this unjust system must include taking the funds previously used to incarcerate predominantly Black residents and channelling them towards resources that actually strengthen Black communities. Instead of siphoning more public resources into incarceration, Cook County should prioritize funding housing, mental and physical healthcare, re-entry support, education, and jobs for those communities harmed by criminalization.

By divesting from the Cook County Jail and investing in the communities most harmed by mass incarceration, the Cook County Board of Commissioners can begin the work of repairing the harms caused by decades of racist "tough on crime" policies.

Alongside our partners, we are asking you to demonstrate that Black Lives Matter in Cook County by supporting this historic resolution.