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TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF ACCESS TO CARE

October 29, 2015

My name is Mark Matusik and I am the Board Chair for the Access to Care program. Thank you for supporting and funding Access to Care in the past. I am here today because funding for Access to Care from Cook County has been cut by 50% in the preliminary 2016 budget and I urge you to reinstate as much of that funding as possible.

Access to Care has been serving the uninsured and under-insured working poor since 1988. It has been part of the Cook County health care delivery system since 1991 when the County first began to provide funding. Access to Care is able to provide a medical home to uninsured or under-insured patients where they may see their Access to Care doctor an unlimited number of times for a \$5 co-payment per visit. They may also get unlimited lab tests, x-rays and prescriptions drugs through Access to Care. We are able to provide these services for \$750 per patient per year by contracting with the private sector for discounts or in-kind contributions that would not be available to the County. The program has served over 100,000 unduplicated individuals since its inception. Access to Care has always been an efficient, cost-effective public-private partnership where County dollars go further because they are used by a charity to get discounts from the private system.

Even after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, many people remain in need. I want to tell you about one patient who recently contacted Access to Care. Joe lost his job at the age of 57. He had been a handyman for a mid-sized employer that provided benefits. After looking for work for almost 2 years he decided to create his own business. He is now working, but jobs are scarce. Joe was happy to learn about Access to Care. He was extremely grateful when he learned he was able to see a doctor for \$5. When he saw his Access to Care doctor they were concerned by his symptoms. He was losing weight and was constantly tired, which caused him to sleep more than would be considered normal. It was sometimes hard for him to get through a day of work, particularly because his work could be physically demanding. The doctor ran lab tests and confirmed what he thought: Joe had a thyroid disorder. He put Joe on thyroid medicine and continues to closely monitor him. Joe stated that his Access to Care doctor provided the "best care I have ever received and he keeps me healthy". Joe thanks everyone involved with Access to Care.

Joe is one of the many people helped through Access to Care who is chronically ill and relies on the program for his care. If funding is cut, many people like Joe may lose much needed health care services. The need for Access to Care is great, thousands of people remain uninsured even after full implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

The Access to Care program is a very cost effective vehicle for Cook County to reach people who live far from public health facilities. On behalf of people like Joe, I ask that you re-instate as much of the funding for Access to Care as possible.

Thank you for listening and for your consideration of this plea.