

Statement to the Cook County Board of Commissioners

Lisa Stephens

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Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations Committee of the Cook County Board of Commissioners. I am honored for the opportunity to serve on the Justice Advisory Council. I believe deeply in public service and I am here to state why I am interested and qualified to serve as a Council member.

My interest in joining the Justice Advisory Council comes from both a deep personal passion for justice and a calling to do my part to help address the injustice that pervades our society's most vulnerable and victimized communities by empowering people.

This calling is what first brought me to work in the justice system as a prosecutor in Cook County. My first day on the job I was told to always "do the right thing". These words have guided every aspect of my professional journey. As a prosecutor, I went to work every day to help protect people and make our community safer. What I loved most about the work was rolling up my sleeves and working with people. And in doing so helping victims and families whose lives had been torn apart by violence. And yet, the more I worked in the system, the more I became aware of its fundamental limitations. I came to realize, that to really help people and be part of meaningful change, it's not enough to convict the guilty or to even reduce crime. To help create safer communities and truly improve public safety, we have to find a way to increase the presence of justice in their lives.

That is what brought me to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA), a State Agency responsible for administering approximately \$100 M of state and federal public safety grants for the State of Illinois. As General Counsel and Chief of Staff, I was responsible for the agency's core operations. In essence, I oversaw ICJIA's essential business, from managing its staff to putting together its budget to helping develop programs. What I have enjoyed most about my work, from being a prosecutor to my work at ICJIA, is rolling up my sleeves and addressing the detail organizations need to address and fulfill their mission.

And while serving at an agency dedicated to advancing a comprehensive vision of justice was incredibly rewarding, I have recently taken on the role of Chief Operating Officer for the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, whose mission is to replace the cycle of violence using the principles, teachings and practices of nonviolence through models of outreach, case management, victim services and nonviolence training. In this role, I will help to build a mission-driven organization that is consistent with the calling that first brought me to work in the justice system.

For these reasons I am thrilled for the opportunity to serve on the Justice Advisory Council and appreciate your consideration.



Lisa Stephens