

Good evening, President Preckwinkle and Cook County Commissioners,

My name is Andrea Durbin and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, and I am also chair of the Pay Now Illinois coalition.

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight about the preliminary budget proposed by President Preckwinkle.

First, I'd like to thank you for previously funding anti-violence efforts +
Like you, I am especially concerned about the destabilizing violence we *for your*
have seen erupt in our communities over the past year. While not wholly to *perseverance*
blame, the Illinois state budget impasse has contributed to this instability, *in these*
threatening public safety and the health of our communities, and *trying times*
destroying our human services infrastructure.

Of course, Cook County itself has been hurt through this budget impasse, as have the community-based partners that Cook County relies on.

As you face the external challenge of the state budget impasse and grapple with funding shortfalls, let me urge you to consider strategically investing more in the front end of the system – in diversion and early intervention programs, especially for youth involved in or at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system. We know there are programs that work by addressing trauma and other mental health conditions, keeping youth in school and preparing them for a positive adulthood. These programs also

interrupt the cycle of violence and help young people avoid the life-long burden of a felony conviction.

When you look at age-crime data, you can clearly see that much of what is plaguing our streets are crimes committed by adolescents and young adults. Criminal activity rises in adolescence, peaks in late adolescence or early adulthood, and then tapers off fairly quickly as people get to their mid-20s and beyond.

If we want to address the problems of crime, violence, and even poverty, this is the crucial time of life when we should be heavily investing in our young people in positive, proactive ways. When young men and women grow up safe and free of felony convictions, they are able to participate in the workforce and in the life of their communities, as positive adults and parents to the next generation.

In these cash-strapped times, where can we find the resources for such an investment? I suggest you look to the deep end of the system – at your corrections facilities – *and especially as ~~pop~~ the census goes down* – and plot a course to re-direct funding from these expensive systems that produce poor outcomes, to less expensive diversion and early intervention programs that can have a significant and long-term impact not only on your criminal justice population, but also on the health and well-being of our communities.

Thank you.