

*Esther Giannarella*

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

The Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition (CHHC) wants to express its unwavering support for the proposed tax on sweetened beverages as a source of revenue for the Cook County budget.

We see this new source of revenue as a potential for enhancing the Cook County Health and Hospital System which provides much needed healthcare services for people who have no other option. It is well known amongst you that the robust network of Community Health Centers are an integral part of the healthcare delivery for those in need and that the doctors and nurses working to provide these great services for everyone do so despite limited resources. For example, with this additional funding the Cook County Health and Hospitals System could make great strides by hiring people who speak Spanish and other languages so that the services can be provided in culturally appropriate manners. As such by funding community health workers as part of the health care system, they can help patients navigate the system to obtain quality care service by integrating health and behavior health before they require critical services and unnecessarily strain emergency resources.

In closing the County Care Health Plan does a lot of good by being the only Medicaid Managed Care program tied to a health system, and that Care Link is a good program to cover undocumented people. Therefore we must ensure we further strengthen this program by providing new preventative services

which can then reduce the financial burden on all tax payers. Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to working with you on this and other health related issues.