

Cook County Board Testimony

My name is Armando Ortiz. I am a Civil Engineer for the Department of Transportation and Highways and I am a member of SEIU Local 73. SEIU Local 73 members serve Cook County residents at the hospitals, health clinics, courthouses, Clerk's Office, Recorder's Office, Treasurer's Office, Cook County Jail and many other locations.

One service SEIU Local 73 members provided to South Suburban Cook County residents was health services through the Oak Forest Intermediate Care Center. With thousands of visits a year, our members provided vital services to the sick, elderly, and injured. We have provided access to the health care needs to our residents of Cook County and neighboring counties. The Intermediate Care Center helped to save lives by providing all the available resources to our residents.

As of last month, we have been informed that the Oak Forest Intermediate Care Center is closed. The Intermediate Care Center is no longer providing these vital services to the residents of Cook County. The health impacts from this decision will eventually begin to reflect

in our southern suburban neighborhoods as many of the local residents and neighboring friends will seek these services elsewhere outside of Cook County.

The \$33 Million loss of revenue due to the Sweetened Beverage Tax injunction is the reason the Oak Forest Intermediate Care Center is closed. Without the revenue generated by the Sweetened Beverage tax; Cook County residents have lost this service as a few SEIU Local 73 members had to take early retirement, and one member lost his job.

If the Sweetened Beverage Tax is repealed, the projected revenue loss will be in excess of \$200 Million. SEIU Local 73 members provide many services which could be eliminated or severely cut back due to the loss in revenue. One example of the services on the chopping block would be the Alcohol and Substance Abuse counseling staff at the Stroger Hospital. SEIU Local 73 members who currently provide this service were targeted in the July layoff. Thankfully, those layoffs were rescinded; but the Alcohol and Substance Abuse counseling provided at Stroger would surely be a target for elimination if the Sweetened Beverage Tax is repealed.

SEIU Local 73 members urge the Commissioners to oppose the repeal of the Sweetened Beverage Tax as it will affect the services provided to our local communities.

Thank you.