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Cook County Commissioners Finance Committee Public Hearing - Cook County Health and Hospital Systems' (CCHHS) Budget

Nadeen Israel, Policy Director, EverThrive Illinois

November 2, 2017

My name is Nadeen Israel and I am the Policy Director at EverThrive Illinois. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this evening.

In case you're not familiar with us, EverThrive Illinois is a non-profit organization that has worked relentlessly over the past 29 years to improve the health of Illinois mothers, children, and families. We are devoted to the promotion and implementation of positive health care reform policies and the strengthening of Medicaid and other safety net systems in Illinois. We provide education for stakeholders and consumers on the impact of health care laws, while advocating for policies that bring us closer to providing every individual with high quality, comprehensive, accessible, and affordable health care.

The Cook County Health and Hospital System (CCHHS) has been a tremendous partner and ally in this work. Each year, CCHHS serves approximately 300,000 patients and 140,000 members of their Medicaid managed care health plan, CountyCare. CCHHS operates two hospitals; a network of community health centers, including one school health center which I will speak more about shortly; provides healthcare for the detainees at Cook County Jail; and serves the public health function for suburban Cook County. CCHHS continues to serve as the primary provider of care for the remaining uninsured and underinsured in Cook County, a role that is vital to the health and well-being of Cook County residents. EverThrive Illinois is very concerned about any potential cuts to the CCHHS budget as the system already operates on a lean budget and any cuts to its FY18 funding from the County will have harmful ripple effects to the health and well-being of Cook County children, women and families.

Now, I'll speak more specifically about one of the programs funded through CCHHS' budget, the Morton East Adolescent Health Center. This school health center (SHC) opened in 1996 in response to the lack of community health care access and a highly underinsured population. It is currently funded through the State's School Health Center Grant program and the CCHHS budget. It provides primary care, behavioral health, dental, nutrition, and preventive services to the student population, their siblings and other youth in the surrounding community. It serves the communities of Cicero, Berwyn, Stickney and Lyons.

The Morton East School Health Center provides care to students and children in the community regardless of their ability to pay. However, they accept all participating insurance plans and managed care organizations (MCO) contracted with CCHHS, and are therefore a revenue-generating source for CCHHS. This school health center has also secured free space for its clinic within the school, so the only cost they incur which is funded by the CCHHS budget is its 4 staff: A Nurse Practitioner; a Licensed Certified Psychiatric Social Worker; a Medical Assistant; and a Clerk. While the Morton East Adolescent Health Center provides a comprehensive set of health

services, it's important to highlight that approximately thirty to forty percent of the youth who utilize its services are there for mental health services. This school health center is a critical component to addressing the mental health needs of the youth in their community.

EverThrive Illinois strongly supports the continued funding of the Morton East Adolescent Health Center in the CCHHS budget. Through the technical assistance, training and advocacy we provide to this and the other 65 school health centers in IL, we understand the critical role this specific school health center fills in its community and the detrimental effects on the community, especially its youth, if it was no longer located in this school.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony tonight and I welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Nadeen Israel
Policy Director
EverThrive Illinois
nisrael@everthriveil.org
(847) 620-9758 (cell)