



Law Office of the
COOK COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

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Amy P. Campanelli • Public Defender

Opening remarks to Finance Committee regarding FY2019 Budget

Good morning. Chairman Daley, Commissioners, and the entire Board, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you this morning to make a few opening remarks. I am Amy Campanelli, Public Defender of Cook County. With me today are my CFO, Peter Kocerka, First Assistant Keith Ahmad, Chief of Staff Lester Finkle, and other members of my office to answer any questions you may have concerning the budget for the Public Defender during Fiscal Year 2019.

The mission of the Public Defender is to protect the fundamental rights, liberties, and dignity of each person whose case has been entrusted to my Office by providing the finest legal representation. We serve every client and have done so for the last 88 years.

First, I want to thank this Board for providing a budget last year that ensured that the rights of my clients were safeguarded. It provided a foundation for us to build upon this year. The President's recommendation for my office for Fiscal Year 19 is \$77 million. It recognizes our mission and core values, and positions us to move forward in the coming years to become a more embracing, holistic office that will help our clients both in and out of the courtroom.

When I was confirmed as the Public Defender three and half years ago, I focused on the top priorities that would improve the service given by my office to our clients, the poor and accused residents of Cook County. In 2015, I told this Board that my priorities included bond court reform, expanding problem solving courts, reaching out to the community and my client base so they understand the work we do, educating communities about their rights and the court system, and elevating the training and professionalism of my staff.

I'm proud to say that since then, we've taken the first steps toward all those priorities, including bond court reform. As you all know, Chief Judge Evans issued an historic order in September 2017, changing the perspective in how bail is set. For too long, the criminal court system assumed someone arrested should remain in jail unless there was a reason to release him. That thinking was wrong. Former United States Attorney General Eric Holder recognized it was wrong, Chief Judge Evans recognized it was wrong, and state legislation has recognized it was wrong. With the change in state law and the order from Chief Judge Evans, our court system is recognizing what I said three years ago – that every man and

woman deserves to be free, deserves to continue working, and deserves to be home fighting their criminal case unless there is a reason to hold them. And there are only two reasons to hold anyone in jail awaiting trial – that he’s a threat to others, or a flight risk. That change in thinking has reduced the jail population from about 8000 in 2015 to 6000 today, with no increase in any threat to our safety. The jail population should and can be even lower if we continue this shift in our way of thinking.

In the last three years, my office has reached out to communities throughout Chicago and Cook County and let everyone know what we do. We have been proactive by going to high schools, faith-based events, neighborhood fairs, and expungement and sealing summits to educate the general public about their rights under the law.

As part of our community service, this past April I started a police station representation unit, with lawyers available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to go to any and every police station in Cook County for anyone in custody who needs a lawyer by his side. I’ve said it so many times, I’ve lost count, but I’ll repeat it again today – no one would think of going through a divorce without a lawyer, or buying a house without a lawyer, or entering into a contract without a lawyer, yet it is considered *revolutionary* to say that someone under arrest and in custody should have a lawyer by his or her side. That thought should not be revolutionary – it should be expected. And for anyone watching this hearing, I want to tell you to call 844-817-4448 to have an attorney at the station to be there for you or a loved one who is in custody. We will be there, no matter your economic status, or where you are in custody in Cook County.

The President’s recommended budget also continues to provide money so my lawyers receive cutting edge training on the law, and also training and education on community services, how to access them, and how to help our clients with life skills once they leave court. Improving their life outside of court will keep them from reoffending.

There is an entire world of opportunity and help ready and waiting outside the confines of criminal court, and we need to connect our clients to that world. We are working with advocates, including stakeholders, legislators, community service providers, and other professionals in the law, to help our clients in their everyday lives. We collaborate with these advocates to help our clients get jobs, get into treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues, continue their education, and expunge and seal their records.

We need to expand the scope of problem solving courts that service veterans, persons with substance abuse problems, victims of sex trafficking, and those with mental health issues. We need to treat all those who suffer, not ignore their symptoms and prosecute them without consideration of their health issues.

That is why I am so proud that the President's budget allows me to continue with police station representation, and also to start another dream of mine that will serve the need of our clients – a mental health unit to help my office recognize mental illness in our clients and direct them to proper resources. Right now, we frequently hire expert witnesses to consult and evaluate our clients, to determine if they are fit for trial or sane. In-house mental health professionals will intimately and confidentially work with attorneys and mitigation staff in understanding diagnosis, medication, and treatment histories of our clients. This information will help provide direction on the best course of action in defending each and every client.

Having this mental health unit is one avenue for public defenders to provide a more holistic defense for their clients. Holistic representation combines zealous advocacy with an understanding that for most poor people charged with a crime, the criminal case is not the only issue they struggle with. Attention needs to be given to the underlying causes of their legal matters.

Indigent defense across the country is recognizing the importance of the holistic approach, and that it leads to better outcomes for clients, their families, and their communities.

You'll notice the poster here that lists my mission and core values. The first core value is that we are client centered. We help the client in all aspects of his life, wherever he or she may be.

Being client centered is why I have asked the Illinois Supreme Court to amend bond court procedures so they are uniform throughout the state and an inherent part of the court rules themselves. It is why I pushed for police station representation, to help those before they come to court, and perhaps stop the wrongfully arrested from becoming the wrongfully charged. It is why I have supported legislation affecting sentencing, juveniles, and treatment options for my clients. And it is why I look forward to police reform and the final consent decree that will be coming out of federal court in the near future.

The President nominated me, and you confirmed me, to have a voice for my clients. Other public defenders who have a voice are doing amazing things in San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, Florida, and New Orleans. I want amazing things to happen right here, in Cook County. The President's recommended budget allows me to continue using my voice to make it happen.

As I've said at other budget hearings, liberty and due process are among our most precious rights. The public defender protects those rights. Thank you for allowing me to speak, and I am ready to answer any questions that you may have.