



Public Comment - Sheriff's Budget Hearing

Chicago Community Bond Fund

www.chicagobond.org

Good morning. My name is Ruby Pinto, and I am the Campaign Coordinator at Chicago Community Bond Fund. CCBF pays bond for people who cannot afford it themselves and would otherwise be incarcerated in Cook County Jail while awaiting trial. Since 2015, we have paid over \$900,000 to free more than 160 people from Cook County Jail or electronic monitoring.

We also advocate for policy reforms so that it is no longer necessary to purchase our neighbors' freedom. Reforms in bond court have been having an effect. In the last five years, the number of people in Cook County Jail has decreased by 44% -- down from almost 11,000 people in 2013 to around 6,000 people today.

Such a large decrease in the number of people in Cook County Jail should result in much more significant savings.

Instead, during that same time, the Sheriff's Budget has increased. Spending on Cook County Jail (the Department of Corrections) increased by 22% between 2013 and 2015, reaching its current \$363 Million. This means an increase in annual spending per person incarcerated from \$24,570 in 2013 to \$59,535 in 2018.

By decreasing the spending on Cook County Jail, money that is currently used to incarcerate people can be reinvested in communities in need of basic social services like medical and mental health care, educational opportunities, job training, and family support.

Instead of continuing to fund Cook County Jail to the tune of \$300+ million per year, the County should reallocate money from the Sheriff's budget to existing and new social services programs that proactively strengthen

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communities and promote public safety through meeting needs. As Benjamin Franklin said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

Using unnecessary money from the Sheriff's budget, Cook County can continue to fund and maintain existing social services programs, expand the best programs, and create new programs that address the root causes of poverty and crime.

Money and human resources would be more appropriately used in, for example, the Department of Planning and Development, Cook County Health and Hospitals, or the Cook County Justice Advisory Council. In particular, saved moneys could be used to expand the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, which is currently only in Chicago, to suburban Cook County. This supportive housing program has been shown to save \$1.20 for every dollar spent, and cut emergency room visits by more than 50%.

I would refer you to Chicago Community Bond Fund's new report, "Money for Communities, Not Cages: Why Cook County Should Reduce the Sheriff's Bloated Jail Budget." It contains more analysis of these issues and more recommendations for preventative investment of the County's resources into services for the same communities previously (and currently) incarcerated in Cook County Jail.

Thank you.