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BUREAU OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Xochitl Flores

BUREAU CHIEF

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TO: Chairman John P. Daley (District 11)
Finance Committee
Cook County Board of Commissioners

CC: Cook County Board of Commissioners

John Roberson
Director of Government and Legislative Affairs
Office of the President

FROM: Xochitl Flores
Bureau Chief
Cook County Bureau of Economic Development

DATE: November 4, 2019

RE: Grants Supporting the Cook County Homeless Population

Q: Please provide information, including the amount of funding, about the County's funding of the homeless through pass-through grants.

A: In the Board package (sent separately), you can see our list of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) awards (page 6 of the PDF). The ESG program is focused specifically on homeless services. We also support agencies providing homeless services via our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Service funding (you can see these on pages 3-4 of the PDF). Our funds are a small portion of the overall funds available to address homelessness (there are also State and Federal resources that agencies receive directly). The Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County (the Alliance) is the entity that coordinates the overall homeless services for suburban Cook County. One of the speakers at the Maywood budget hearing, Katie Spoden, was from the Alliance. We partner closely with the Alliance related to how we use the County's ESG funding and on other homeless efforts.

Lynda Schueler, from Housing Forward, was one of the other speakers at the Maywood hearing. Housing Forward has been a longtime recipient of ESG and CDBG funding from the County, and they are the primary homeless services provider in the west Cook suburbs. As Lynda articulated, the demand far outstrips the available resources. One pilot effort that the County supported recently with both Housing Forward and the Alliance is in the area of homeless "diversion". Katie from the Alliance mentioned this at the hearing. Diversion is a newer approach gaining popularity because it can keep more people from becoming homeless and is typically a less expensive intervention. One of the early lessons from our pilot, however, is that the ESG funding does not have the flexibility (due to regulatory restrictions) that is needed to provide all the services necessary for a successful diversion program. As a result, Katie suggested the idea of the County providing flexible funding in this year's County budget to increase diversion efforts. The County's corporate funding could be a source of funding that would allow these agencies to enhance the homeless diversion efforts.

Separate Cover: 2019 HUD Entitlements Board Package