

Office of the Chief of Police

April 21, 2020

Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 N. Clark Street, Suite 567
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Cook County Commissioners,

We are writing to you about an urgent issue surrounding public safety in Illinois during this coronavirus outbreak. Please note that this letter is written on behalf of Riverside Fire Emergency Service Chief Matthew Buckley and me. Chief Buckley has taken a lead in this issue from the beginning.

Together, we are urging you to immediately amend and/or suspend the HIPAA requirements in order to be notified of a residents' address when they are confirmed to have Covid-19.


As you may know, the Attorney General in Illinois already weighed in on this issue and said that law enforcement is able to receive this information. However, at least in Cook County, they are refusing, as of the date of this letter, to release that information to both police and fire agencies. I want to be clear. We are not asking for any personal information such as names, dates of birth, sex or any other identifiers. All we want released are the addresses where they will be recovering so we can provide a safe environment for our officers and firefighters.


There is an exception to the general rule which states no consent is required if disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and immediate threat to the health or safety of a person or the public, and is to a person or persons reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, 45 C.F.R.164.512(j)(1)(i).

The bottom line is disclosure to first responders will enable them to use personal protective equipment (PPE) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, so the exception we believe absolutely applies.

We are asking you and your staff to take immediate action on your executive order to address this issue for the greater public safety in Illinois. We are only asking for this information to be released during the pandemic. Once the pandemic is deemed to have subsided, the rule could be instituted once again.

Respectfully,


Thomas Weitzel
Chief of Police


Matthew Buckley
Riverside Fire/EMS Chief

C: Village Manager Jessica Frances
President Ben Sells and Board of Trustees
State Representative Michael Zalewski, 23rd District
Chief Tom Aftanas, President West Suburban Chiefs of Police and Forest Park Police Chief

Provide quality municipal services to our residents and visitors in a fiscally responsible manner consistent with our Village's historic tradition and community atmosphere.

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