

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET HEARINGS
20-4595 - FY 2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET RECOMMENDATION**

	Witness Name:	Organization (if any):	City/Town:
83.	Irakere Picon	Defenders for All Coalition	Chicago
84.	Avril Greenberg	Designing Your Life	Chicago
85.	Stephanie Agnew	Chicago Appleseed	Chicago
86.	Gabrielle Caroselli	Recipe for Change	Chicago
87.	Douglas	Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition	Chicago
88.	Grant Richardson	Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition	Chicago
89.	Peter Contos	Cannabis Equity IL Coalition	Chicago
90.	Alex Boutros	Cannabis Equity IL Coalition	Chicago
91.	Lauryn Wyatt	Concerned Citizen	Chicago

#83

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
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IP Address: 73.22.237.95

Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name:	Irakere Picon
Organization (if any):	Defenders for All Coalition
City/Town:	Chicago
State:	IL
ZIP:	60608

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

On behalf of the more than 40 immigrant community organizations, criminal justice reform advocates, and faith leaders representing the Defenders for All Coalition (D4A), we submit this testimony in support of the Budget for Black Lives proposal. The D4A previously supported the Justice for Black Lives resolution 20-2867 and our coalition remains supportive of that resolution and the proposal to reallocate funds from the Cook County Sheriff and the County Jail to be fund services and programs that promote community health and safety, particularly in Black, Brown, and immigrant communities.

Both locally and nationally, Black, Brown, and immigrant communities are calling on elected officials to redirect resources and funds from carceral institutions back into communities that have been disinvested for decades; we believe this resolution is a great starting point in laying the foundation of our shared values towards this united goal. We need to allocate public funds and resources that promote community health and safety in order to engage in restorative processes that address harm and generate needed accountability of law enforcement while working to heal Black, Brown, and immigrant communities impacted by violence.

In fact, Cook County annually allocates more than \$600 million for the Sheriff's budget, consisting of funding for the Sheriff's police force, the Cook County Jail, and more. Despite the number of people incarcerated in Cook County Jail decreasing by more than 50% since 2013, the budget for the jail has actually increased by more than 25%, meaning that \$117 million are available for services if the County Board made changes to the Sheriff and County Jail's budget to reflect changes in the jail population. Why is it that the County Jail continues to see increases in funding all the while the jail population has decreased, thereby requiring less funds and resources that can instead be used for better purposes?

According to Commissioner Brandon Johnson, "as spending on police and incarceration has gone up over the last decade, Black and Brown people actually feel less safe." The growing distrust of the police force demonstrates the need for supporting pillars of public services such as housing, health care, mental health, restorative justice, legal representation, public transit, job creation, and increased opportunities for minority/women business owners. When a department so spectacularly fails to deliver on its promise of protection, service, and safety, it is time to reevaluate.

Cook County government at this moment has an opportunity to be a national and local leader in providing a framework that addresses systemic racism and champions justice for all. We urge the County Board to support and adopt a Budget for Black Lives which will reinvest \$157 million dollars from the Sheriff's Office and County Jail into physical and mental health programs, restorative justice initiatives, funding for the Cook County Public Defender's Office.

Q3

Acknowledgement of submitting written testimony only

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#84

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name: Avril Greenberg
Organization (if any): Designing Your Life
City/Town: Chicago
State: IL
ZIP: 60609

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

To the Cook County Board of Commissioners,

I would like to thank the many people within the CCDOC, including Ron Howard, who have taken an integrative approach to prison education and have supported programming to the detainees.

I have been participating in several programs within the CCDOC for over 5 years, working with both men and women detainees. I have worked as a culinary educator, and I also facilitated several workshops called "Designing Your Life" which focused on the evaluation and implementation of life skills and conceptualizing a future outside of the CCDOC.

I found the experience of teaching at the CCDOC to be rewarding and feel as if the programs that I have been involved with have been beneficial to the participants. As one participant stated, "The program made me realize there's more to life than just jail. It was a taste of the real world while inside, and gave me a sense of purpose while inside not just sitting and doing time".

I believe that "just doing time" rather than using the time in jail to educate or learn a skill that might be of value outside of the correctional facility, is counterintuitive to the goal of reducing rates of recidivism for our incarcerated citizens. I have seen the value of programming inside of the CCDOC, and I sincerely hope that we will be able to continue offering workshops and educational opportunities for the detainees.

Thank you for your time.

Avril Greenberg

Q3

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#85

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name:	Stephanie Agnew
Organization (if any):	Chicago Appleseed
City/Town:	Chicago
State:	IL
ZIP:	60655

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

Black, Brown, and lower-income communities in Cook County are in deep crisis due to decades of systemic racism, violence, and economic divestment that have now been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Cook County budget issued on October 15 gives \$42 million for absolutely necessary public service expansions for these communities, it falls short of the kind of reinvestment necessary to fundamentally improve equity, wellbeing, and opportunity for all in Cook County. While we applaud the investments in the Public Defender's Office, the elimination of vacant positions from the Sheriff's Office, and the expanded funding for the Justice Advisory Council, Chicago Appleseed believes that some of the funding allocations in President's proposed 2021 budget would be better spent supporting proven, harm-reducing policies and resources.

Cook County has a higher poverty rate than the surrounding counties, and much of that can be attributed to the historically ineffective and racist policies of our local criminal legal system. The cycles of poverty created by fines, fees, and other costs of punitive approaches are detrimental in myriad ways—for everyone living in our community. In the past several years, though, Cook County has seen much success when we prioritize humanity over monetary gain. For example, County and Circuit Court data shows that in the 15 months following General Order 18.8A (bond reform), 99% of people charged with felonies who were released pretrial were not charged with a new violent offense and 83.2% of released people make all of their scheduled court appearances.

Still, today there are 5,434 people in Cook County Jail—over a 30% increase since the Jail's lowest number (around 4,000 people) during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in May—but still substantially less than before General Order 18.8A was implemented. Unfortunately, Sheriff Tom Dart continues to call for massive spending on policing and incarceration that harm Black and Brown communities. The Sheriff's budget increases spending on the Cook County Jail despite a continued decrease in the number of people incarcerated on average.

Chicago Appleseed proudly supports the Budget for Black Lives Coalition's proposal from early September that reinvests \$157 million from the Sheriff's Office into community-based public services – a proposal that clearly reflects Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle's stated priorities to create an equitable Cook County.

Q3

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name:	Gabrielle Caroselli
Organization (if any):	Recipe for Change
City/Town:	Chicago
State:	IL
ZIP:	60642

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

Hi, my name is Gabrielle Caroselli and I'm the Executive Director of Recipe for Change a Chicago-based nonprofit. Thank you for taking the time to hear from me and the rest of the people who have spoken or provided written statements today. Recipe for Change is a workforce development nonprofit operating within Division 11 and MHTC at Cook County Department of Corrections. We provide culinary training and fine arts enrichment to pre-trial detainees within the jail. Our participants earn sanitation certifications and have the opportunity to participate in a pizza internship while in the program. We believe in the transformative power of programming and the benefits it has on detainees while incarcerated and upon reentry. The participants of our program are able to spend their time being productive, learning skills, and being treated with the dignity they deserve. We appreciate the support and resources that the Cook County Sheriff's Office provides in helping us deliver these services. I am writing today to urge the Committee to continue funding programs, like ours, within the Cook County Department of Corrections.

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name: Douglas
Organization (if any): Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition
City/Town: Chicago
State: IL
ZIP: 60621

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

My name is __Douglas Kelly__

I am a leader of the organization (Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition) and live in District (7 M).

I am joining this evening to urge the Cook County Board of Commissioners to require the Chief Judge Timothy Evans to prioritize his 2021 budgeting to include the assignment of additional judges in District 1-Chicago, as a action of his office and with the support of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, to begin to unclog the expungement and sealing backlog

Q3

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name: Grant Richardson
Organization (if any): Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition
City/Town: Chicago
State: IL
ZIP: 60605

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

Dear Commissioners, Good Evening.

My name is Grant Richardson.

I am a leader of the organization Illinois Cannabis Training Center and a member of the Cannabis Equity Illinois Coalition. I live in District 1.

I am joining this evening to urge the Cook County Board of Commissioners to require Chief Judge Timothy Evans to prioritize in his 2021 budget the increased assignment of additional judges in District 1-Chicago, for the purpose of expediting the expungement process. This critical action of his office, and with the support of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, is absolutely necessary in order to begin to unclog the expungement and sealing backlog.

Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. If you have any questions about this request, or would like to follow up with myself and my colleagues, you can reach me here: grant@icanntrain.com

Q3

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name:	Peter Contos
Organization (if any):	Cannabis Equity IL Coalition
City/Town:	Chicago
State:	IL
ZIP:	60625

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

Dear Commissioners, Good Evening.

My name is Peter Contos. I am an organizer with the Cannabis Equity IL Coalition. We are a grassroots non-profit formed in early 2019 working to ensure the people and communities most impacted by cannabis prohibition are prioritized in its legalization. I am a resident of the 8th District.

I am joining this evening to urge the Cook County Board of Commissioners to require Chief Judge Timothy Evans to prioritize in his 2021 budget the increased assignment of additional judges in District 1-Chicago, for the purpose of expediting the expungement process. This critical action of his office, and with the support of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, is absolutely necessary in order to begin to unclog the expungement and sealing backlog.

Currently, it takes well over a year to clear your record in Chicago. This has a considerable impact on someone who's returning to the community's ability to get a job, find housing, get an education, and so much more. For the 2nd largest county in the nation to allow this to continue is simply unacceptable, and we are calling on this body to help usher in necessary change.

I thank you all for allowing me to speak tonight, and for your work. If you have any questions about this request, or would like to follow up with myself and my colleagues, you can reach me at: Pcontos10@gmail.com. You can reach our Coalition directly at CannabisEquityIL@gmail.com

Thank you.

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#90

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Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name: Alex Boutros
Organization (if any): Cannabis Equity IL Coalition
City/Town: Chicago
State: IL
ZIP: 60613

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

I am pleading that the County includes additional judges to review expungement cases in District 1 (Chicago). There is an immense backlog because of the lack of capacity put towards this. This needs to change, so people can move on with their lives.

Q3

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#91

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IP Address: 24.148.4.105

Page 1

Q1

Please provide some basic information

Witness Name: Lauryn Wyatt
City/Town: Chicago
State: IL

Q2

Written Statement? You can type or copy/paste any written statement you want included in the meeting record here. If this is not enough space, or you have other attachments for distribution, please email them to cookcounty.board@cookcountyil.gov

Include additional judges to review expungement cases in District 1 (Chicago). Stop being petty and let's move forward. No one has time for this. It's clear what's going on.

Q3

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