



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 21-5290, **Version:** 2

---

### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE ITEM # 21-5290-**

#### **DECLARING MENTAL HEALTH A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

**WHEREAS**, Public Health Awareness raises awareness of the relationship between the health of individuals and the health of their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, behavioral health is a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being including substance use disorders; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of the pandemic we have seen a rise in the use of and need for behavioral health services across the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness and 1 in 20 have a serious mental illness; and

**WHEREAS**, according to NAMI, people with serious mental illness have an increased risk for chronic disease, like diabetes or cancer, 18% of U.S. adults with mental illness also have a substance use disorder, 21% of people experiencing homelessness also have a serious mental illness, 1 in 8 of all visits to U.S. emergency departments are related to mental and substance use disorders, and

**WHEREAS**, suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death of people ages 10-34 in the US and 46% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition; and

**WHEREAS**, according to data collected by the Chicago Department of Public Health, in 2018, roughly 54,000 people received behavioral health treatment while in 2020 there were over 68,000 people who received behavioral health treatment, accounting for an 26% increase in comparison to individuals who have received treatment in 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County Health's Department of Psychiatry provided care for more than 8,700 patients in need of behavioral health services in 2019 and has cared for 8,695 patients during the first two quarters of 2021 ; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Cook County Medical Examiner's office there has been an average of 475 deaths per year by suicide since 2017. With roughly 329 deaths recorded for 2021, Cook County is currently on pace to reach the previous years' average.; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that Cook County, led by the President and the Board of Commissioners, declare Mental Health A Public Health Crisis in Cook County and affecting our entire society; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Cook County and Cook County Health continue to work In collaboration with their community partners including community healthcare providers and mental health and community-based organizations including the Cook County Behavioral Health Consortium to:

1.

2. **assess internal plans, policies and procedures to ensure solutions to address the lack of awareness and the need for increased behavioral health services in Cook County;**
3. **create strategies to increase awareness of behavioral health services;**
4. **increase funding for behavioral health services including mental health and substance use treatment; and continue collaborative and coordinating efforts with the Justice Advisory Council which provides community based investments for behavioral health services including mental health and substance abuse treatment for impacted residents at risk of, and/or involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems; and**
5. **increase access to inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services**
6. **work with marginalized populations to provide education on behavioral health, issues and solutions**
7. **assess and advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and**
8. **support local, State, and Federal programs that advance behavioral health initiatives; and**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, in collaboration with the CCH CEO or his designee, we dedicate funding to augment existing resources and advocate for additional external funding for educational campaigns to increase public awareness of behavioral health services in an effort to reduce stigma; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the County will encourage other local, State, and national entities to declare mental health a public health crisis; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the County Board hereby supports the efforts to address public health disparities due to lack of behavioral health resources throughout Cook County.