



**Office of the Cook County Board President
Toni Preckwinkle**

Good morning. Thank you for joining me.

Today I would like to present our Cook County Budget Recommendation for Fiscal Year 2020. This \$6.18 billion dollar budget is both responsible and responsive and guides our work in justice, health, economic development and the environment.

This budget builds upon our commitment to serve as a good steward of public resources and create vibrant and sustainable communities for all our residents.

Importantly—and something I'm sure all residents will be happy to hear—we are doing this without the need to increase existing taxes.

This has been possible because we have avoided quick fixes and one-time solutions. We've done the hard work and heavy lifting. We've instilled sound fiscal discipline. We've ensured that more than 90 percent of our annual budgetary solutions are structural in nature. This budget is no different.

Since my first day in office we have closed \$2.1 billion dollars in budget gaps and cut expenditures by more than \$850 million dollars.

This June, we announced a historically low projected preliminary gap of \$18.7 million. This was the **lowest** preliminary gap of my administration and an almost **96 percent decrease** from the \$487 million I encountered in my first year in office.

We've come a long way since I walked in the door. And while I pointed out the problems we faced early, I believe inherited challenges shouldn't make for easy excuses. We rolled up our sleeves, made difficult decisions and took hard votes—for which I am very grateful to our Board of Commissioners.

My vision for a better Cook County hasn't come without challenges and difficulties. Doing what is right and responsible isn't always easy.

We have developed and implemented a plan to prevent insolvency in the years ahead by providing increased contributions to the Pension Fund. We recognized a problem with the funding mechanism and took **definitive** steps to address it in a **responsible** manner.

We continue to dedicate supplemental funding to shore up the pension fund. To date, Cook County has provided supplemental pension payments of almost \$1.3 billion

dollars **above** the required contribution, significantly reducing the unfunded pension liability — something we are very proud of.

On its surface, a budget is paperclips and pens, people and pensions, principles and priorities. But it's more important than that. This budget reflects our values.

It's more than numbers, dollar signs and decimals — wielded properly, it is a tool for providing care, nourishing neighborhoods, fostering economic development, and creating opportunities.

Last year I unveiled my Cook County Policy Roadmap: a Five-Year Strategic Plan for offices under my administration.

The Policy Roadmap ensures that we maximize our impact and make our reforms long-lasting. Under the Roadmap, we are promoting fiscal responsibility; advancing reforms in the criminal justice arena; ensuring residents have access to quality healthcare; protecting the environment; connecting people through transit and public infrastructure; and serving as a regional leader in growing the economy.

The Policy Roadmap addresses the challenges facing Cook County residents today. The Roadmap establishes my administration's core values of **equity, engagement** and **excellence**. It guides all our budget efforts.

While the executive budget recommendation is a comprehensive document that encompasses many priorities, today I would like to focus on how we are working to advance equity—and specifically, racial equity—in the way in which we invest our resources and prioritize our spending.

Because of the difficult work we've done over the past nine years, we can now re-invest our budget savings to advance health equity, re-envision our criminal justice system, and expand access to transit.

This budget works to improve public health outcomes by expanding Medicaid coverage and investing in outpatient services to ensure vital health care access for the most vulnerable residents of the County.

In the coming year, Cook County Health will continue transforming into a healthcare organization of choice. Cook County Health will focus on integrating health and social services and addressing health inequities.

Despite operating only **two** of the **68** hospitals in Cook County, Provident and Stroger, Cook County Health provides over 50% of all charity care in the County and serves as a safety net for many residents.

Although Medicaid enrollment is declining nationwide, County Care, the insurance plan Cook County Health owns and operates, remains the largest Medicaid managed care plan in Cook County. With 318,000 members currently, it expects to grow to 326,000 members in Fiscal Year 2020.

Next year, Cook County Health will improve service delivery by expanding surgical services at both Provident and Stroger, as well as increasing dialysis services at Provident. New outpatient clinics will provide enhanced services to residents and extend the footprint of the network toward the edges of Cook County. Cook County Health aims to improve health outcomes and increase primary care visits to reduce unnecessary and costly emergency room visits. Cook County Health will also continue providing mental health services to detainees at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.

While we continue to deliver this important care for our residents, we must be mindful of the challenges our system faces from the growth in uncompensated care. Therefore, I encourage the Cook County Health Board to implement strategies to encourage CountyCare members to use Cook County services and effectively manage the cost of providing care. We will continue to advocate on Cook County Health's behalf at the State and Federal levels to ensure we are able to build on our progress and continue providing life-saving care.

In Fiscal Year 2020 we will begin construction of the new Provident Hospital. The current hospital will remain open throughout construction to provide continued care. The new hospital will provide state-of-the-art patient care in a historically underserved part of the County.

We are making this investment in Provident to improve health outcomes in communities of color on the south side of Chicago and in south Cook County because we still face **enormous** health disparities that must be addressed. With this budget recommendation, we are investing in equity.

Healthcare comprises almost half of our budget. Another large portion of the budget, of course, is dedicated to the criminal justice system.

To create safe communities and an equitable and fair justice system for all our residents, Cook County will continue to implement reforms within the criminal justice system, invest in community-based services, and work with public safety stakeholders to provide the resources necessary to reduce violence. This year we will allocate millions to enhance Cook County's collaborative efforts with public safety partners and continue our work to transform the criminal justice system into one that is fair, compassionate, efficient and transparent.

One way we are doing that is by saving money—and lives—with our bail reforms. Keeping pre-trial defendants out of jail and in their communities not only allows people to remain with their jobs and families and keep up with their responsibilities—it also saves the County millions of dollars. We can then invest in those same communities and residents who have been most negatively impacted by mass incarceration and the consequences of inequitable policies, practices and disparate outcomes for black and brown residents. We can invest more in reducing violence, reducing recidivism, and promoting restorative justice.

Through our Justice Advisory Council, Cook County has done just that, by making investments of more than \$18 million dollars in grants to community-based organizations for people involved in the criminal justice system. **These grants transform lives.** For example: Habilitative Systems has implemented Project RESTORE Our Youth. This project combines evidence-based restorative justice models with wrap-around social services to serve at-risk youth between the ages of 11 and 17.

Another grantee, Rincon Family Services, helps justice-involved youth with evidenced-based treatment and an integrated restorative justice model that includes facilitated peace circles and restorative restitution.

These programs are culturally competent to be inclusive of the region's Latinx communities.

For many years, the average daily population detained in the Cook County Jail hovered at roughly 10,000 people. Today, the average daily jail population hovers at about 6,000 people **without impacting public safety**, largely because of our criminal justice and bail reform efforts.

Cook County has also worked with the Illinois State Legislature to dramatically decrease the number of young people who are automatically transferred to adult court. We also oversaw the end of a federal monitor at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. These efforts have resulted in a 50% decline in Cook County's detained youth population in the last decade. As with our adult population, we have been able to re-invest our resources in more of the critical wrap-around services and after school programming our youth need to make better decisions, in the communities where they live.

Our work in criminal justice reform is far from over. We have implemented data-driven strategies in partnership with our criminal justice stakeholders to **safely** reduce the jail population. In 2016 we also began exploring how we could transform the criminal justice landscape through the built environment – namely, facilities that support the system. This work has already been demonstrated by the demolition of several divisions at the Cook County Jail. We also engaged external consultants to assess the use of our court rooms and the needs of our communities and stakeholders. This assessment has informed a plan for the future of the facility.

In the coming year we will move forward with our plan to demolish two more divisions at the jail. Lowering the jail population through criminal justice reform allows us to demolish outmoded buildings—and bring down costs. As we see declines in the number of detainees, it is **morally** and **fiscally** responsible to reduce the number of divisions at the jail. This will pave the way for more comprehensive rehabilitation and mental health programming in our criminal justice system.

Far from the overcrowded modern-day poorhouse the jail was when I walked in the door, now we can reimagine the criminal justice system, and prioritize our investments, **not** in unnecessary detention, but in creating **truly** safe and thriving communities.

When it comes to creating thriving communities, we also prioritize economic development, which has an impact both on the health **and** safety of our residents.

We know many of the communities most plagued by violence are the ones that suffered from decades of disinvestment and government redlining. Those communities will benefit the **most** from targeted economic investments.

In Fiscal Year 2020 we will continue to invest in opportunities for communities in **need** in suburban Cook County through job training programs, public infrastructure investments and affordable housing. Cook County will pursue **inclusive** economic growth by supporting residents, growing businesses, attracting investment and nurturing talent. Inclusive growth can't be attained without prioritizing investments according to **need**, and we do just that with our economic development efforts.

One of the priorities of this administration is lifting up Cook County's south suburbs. South Cook County has **so much** to offer: people, infrastructure, businesses and real estate critical to the health of the regional economy. But in recent years parts of the south suburbs have struggled as they have become increasingly disconnected from the region. As a result, the Bureau of Economic Development has worked with public and private partners to initiate the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative.

This initiative will create the capacity for coordinated, long-term economic development in the Southland. Last year we established a Small Business Development Center to serve the Southland, and this year we will launch a Southland Development Authority to facilitate revitalization in the region.

To catalyze housing rehabilitation, economic development and infrastructure projects in the south suburbs, Cook County's Department of Planning and Development will also disburse \$10.6 million dollars in Community Development Block Grants.

These investments in economic development have an even greater impact because of our investments in transportation.

We continue to invest in highway and transportation infrastructure to ensure the County maintains its competitiveness as the Midwest's key distribution and logistics hub.

I am especially proud of the work we are doing in Transportation and Highways to maximize these investments and attract matching federal funds. Empowered by its strategic plan, Connecting Cook County, Transportation and Highways has vastly expanded its scope of work. The Department is willing to tackle the big projects and bring every agency and municipality to the table to get them done.

We've seen that innovation and ambition with Invest in Cook, an \$8.5 million dollar transportation grant program that provides financial and technical resources for every phase of an infrastructure project.

In Fiscal Year 2020, Cook County will further advance Invest in Cook projects through strategic partnerships and

grant applications to secure additional funding. The Department of Transportation and Highways has established a Fiscal Year 2020 target of \$40 million dollars of funding for Invest in Cook projects.

One project I would like to call out in particular is a bridge that we have proposed to build in the Village of Burnham. This project is a perfect example of the kind of work that will have a real impact on the lives of our residents.

The Village of Burnham is home to several rail lines that create heavy traffic congestion. For over 40 years, the elected officials of the village requested a solution to a problem that has plagued a particular intersection and caused significant delays. And for 40 years, no agency would take on the project, until that is the Department of Transportation and Highways stepped in.

With the help of Invest in Cook, staff resources, and matching federal funds, the Village of Burnham will finally get that bridge that they've been requesting for four decades. And while this is not be a project that anyone expects to be **completed** tomorrow, the Burnham Bridge is just another example of how Cook County is investing **in** tomorrow.

I'm also excited to move forward with the Fair Transit Pilot Program. In Fiscal Year 2020, Transportation and Highways will begin implementation of the pilot, an outcome of the South Cook Mobility Study. Cook County and its transit agency partners will design this pilot to deliver better transit services in southern Cook County.

As you may have recently heard, we've discussed fare policy changes, increases in service, and better coordination between Metra, the Chicago Transit Authority, and Pace. I am confident that we will move forward with this important initiative. Improving transportation on the south side of Chicago and south Cook County will provide much needed transit options to disconnected communities that need better access to the city.

This is the first step towards building a Cook County Transit Plan that is equitable and redefines how public transportation can be improved across the region.

Investing in infrastructure is essential, in everything from transportation to technology—and **that** impacts our elections, as well.

We have an important election coming up in 2020.

As Congress investigates a President who has shown little or no concern about the preservation and protection of the integrity of elections, we must be mindful and we must be prepared. Cook County is taking meaningful steps to protect and secure our elections. The president and some lawmakers may be content to ignore this problem or encourage this shameful attack on our democracy by foreign countries. I am not.

That is why we are working with the Cook County Clerk's Office to implement a state-of-the-art system to administer our elections. The new system will benefit the 1.5 million registered voters in suburban Cook County and improve election administration for all stakeholders.

We are also investing our resources to ensure every person is counted in the 2020 census. We set aside \$2 million dollars in our Fiscal Year 2019 budget for census initiatives and we are earmarking another \$2 million in this Fiscal Year 2020 budget. This money will support community-based education and outreach efforts for hard-to-count communities across Cook County, including people of color, children under the age of five, immigrants, non-native English speakers, renters, students and LGBTQ communities.

With nearly 40 percent of the state's population residing in Cook County and congressional representation also at stake, the impact could not be greater for our residents. Cook County will do its part to help ensure a complete count.

We are doing all of this good work because we have been mindful of our long-term goals and potential challenges. We have kept fiscal responsibility and structural changes at the forefront of our decision-making.

We are promoting a long-term plan for fiscal sustainability to address legacy liabilities and preserve essential public safety and public health services.

Each and every budget, we have faced challenges and navigated these difficulties and we will continue to do so. Our residents expect it of us. I am committed to building upon the progress we have made.

Because with every dollar we save, we can reinvest where it **counts**, and where it **belongs**—with our residents and communities.

Thank you.