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November 13, 2017

Cook County Board of Commissioners  
118 N Clark Street  
Chicago IL 60602

Dear Commissioners:

Our union AFSCME represents some 4,500 men and women who work for Cook County. Every day in every part of our county they are serving their fellow residents, your constituents, as public defenders and investigators, probation officers, sheriff's police, jail sergeants and lieutenants, and staff in the Health and Hospital System and the offices of the Assessor, Chief Judge, Medical Examiner, Public Guardian and State's Attorney.

These AFSCME members are hard-working and committed public servants who do the real work of Cook County government—providing health care, protecting public safety, keeping one of the world's largest court systems running and much more. Years of cuts have made their jobs more difficult: Nearly 3,000 positions, more than 10 percent of the county workforce, have been eliminated since 2010.

We are disturbed and disappointed that—having voted to repeal the sweetened beverage tax that would have improved public health outcomes while raising needed revenue—commissioners are now discussing harmful cuts to frontline county jobs that are necessary to provide public services and contribute to the economic health of our communities.

We have been informed of the likelihood of major layoffs in the chief judge's office and the county jail. These would jeopardize jail security and put public safety at risk.

It's likewise unacceptable to insist that county employees absorb unpaid furlough days, step freezes or other pay cuts. Over the past decade, negotiated pay increases have averaged less than 2 percent per year, barely keeping pace with inflation.

Commissioners didn't think every county resident and visitor should share the cost of county services through a penny-per-ounce consumption tax on sweetened beverages that no one is compelled to buy. How is it fair to demand that frontline county employees alone bear the \$200 million annual cost of your repeal?



As you consider budget amendments, you should reject unfair and unworkable cuts that would harm the county's vital public services and the dedicated workers who provide them. Instead, take the time to develop responsible solutions that provide the revenue necessary to fund the county government that residents rely on. It is better to delay the budget calendar in order to find a fair solution than to rush into a flawed approach that will hurt Cook County residents, reduce services and scapegoat employees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roberta Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roberta" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Lynch".

Roberta Lynch  
Executive Director