

February 27, 2024

**Testimony to the Health & Hospitals Committee of the
Cook County Board of Commissioners**



Hello. I am Wesley Epplin and I serve as the Director of Health Equity at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group. Health & Medicine's mission is to build power and momentum for social justice and health equity in Illinois.

In brief, for the Cook County Health CEO position, we need someone committed to social justice and health equity; who has public health experience and a track record of action on root causes of health inequities; and someone with experience in public health care, Medicaid, managed care, and working with unions.

Below is a list of recommended qualities and experiences for the Cook County Health CEO position from Health & Medicine's perspective:

- Strong commitment to Cook County Health continuing its mission of providing care to all people who come through its doors and need it, regardless of ability to pay
- Commitment to health care as a human right and the public sector's role in ensuring people can access high-quality, affordable, accessible, and culturally responsive care
- Managing a large public healthcare system with managed care and Medicaid as central elements
- Managing contracts with a unionized workforce and a demonstrated commitment to strong unions
- Capacity to strengthen internal policies, staff training, culture, and communications for ensuring hospitals and clinics are safe, welcoming, and affirming places to provide and receive health care for all people
- Dedication to improving public health
- Dedication to growing the Cook County Department of Public Health and keeping it well-funded and sufficiently staffed, with appropriate independence
- Understanding of managed care finances and operations
- Management of a large, multi-site health system with operations that include inpatient, outpatient, public health, and correctional health components
- Demonstrated experience in a teaching medical center environment and commitment to teaching and leading in new practice models
- Demonstrated experience addressing and improving quality in a large multi-sector system
- Experience with and commitment to health care for large immigrant and migrant populations
- Demonstrated long-term commitment to health care equity—and health equity more broadly—in the Chicago region, preferably with roots in and deep knowledge of Chicagoland communities
- Understanding of the links between root causes and health inequities, especially of the particular historical and contemporary root causes of health inequities in the Chicago region
- Demonstrated ability to manage and share leadership with a well-qualified executive team
- Demonstrated commitment to open communication with external parties, including health organizations, journalists, and the general public
- Demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the health workforce
- Demonstrated commitment to ensuring a healing-centered, trauma-informed health care environment for patients

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- Demonstrated commitment to ensuring a healing-centered, trauma-informed workplace for workers
- Demonstrated ability to streamline hiring processes, improve retention, and reduce the vacancy rate in a large health care institution

Whatever the qualifications of the new CEO, it is crucial to think about management from a team perspective, and that together, a team can cover the various necessary content expertise, competencies, and experience for successfully managing Cook County Health and CountyCare.

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