

Hello, my name is Wesley Epplin and I serve as the Director of Health Equity at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, a nonprofit focused on advancing health equity in Illinois.

Health & Medicine is part of the Public Health Woke coalition and has repeatedly brought to the attention of the Cook County Health & Hospital System Board the need for the institution to take swift action to ensure that healthcare settings are as safe as possible—and that patients and visitors are provide welcoming and affirming healthcare across CCHHS clinics and hospitals. Based on our review of actions by CCHHS, work on this front has been insufficient and inadequate.

As a member of the Public Health Woke coalition, Health & Medicine repeats the demands that we have made of the CCHHS Board since the first half of 2017. **President Preckwinkle is urged to take leadership on ensuring that the CCHHS Board takes action on these matters immediately by prompting the CCHHS Board and Administration to implement stronger action to support immigrants and other marginalized groups. Include these recommendations in the strategic plan for Cook County.**

1. **Place clear signage.** Place abundant and clear signage in multiple languages assuring a welcoming institution at all CCHHS buildings.
 - a. Reviews of signage by people who speak Arabic noted that the Arabic translation on the signs that have thus far been developed is not a quality, meaningful translation. CCHHS must ensure accurate and meaningful translation.
2. **Provide staff training.** Conduct in-depth staff training and resources for all CCHHS staff, addressing needs of marginalized patients & families.
 - a. This includes training around internal policies and procedures, per recommendation #4.
3. **Implement a legal referrals system.** Establish referral systems for legal services, distribution of know-your-rights information, and other necessary resources.
 - a. Local immigrant rights groups should be consulted on this matter.
4. **Strengthen internal policies and procedures.** Clarify, revise, & strengthen policies & procedures that focus on protecting immigrant and marginalized patients.
 - a. Use the attached guide, Public Health Actions for Immigrant Rights as a guide, and Public Health Woke can provide assistance on this front.
5. **Monitor community stress.** Identify and monitor indicators & neighborhood stress in immigrant & marginalized communities.
 - a. CCHHS should collaborate with Cook County Department of Public Health staff to do this.
6. **Ensure best practices for patients facing increased stress and trauma.** Design and implement best practices for clinical and public health providers to deliver appropriate care.
 - a. This should include education, training, and role-playing that helps providers know how to ask sensitive questions about immigration status in a way that is affirming and caring, and that will not cause further concern or trauma.

Health & Medicine remains one of the strongest supporters of CCHHS and we want to ensure its success of achieving its 180 year mission to care for all regardless of ability to pay or immigration status. Taking action on these demands is mission-critical for CCHHS. Both the actions and threats of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents should prompt action from this institution. There is no time to wait, as our neighbors need your help right now.

To assist President Preckwinkle's Office with understanding these issues and organizing action, the Public Health Woke Coalition is willing to provide assistance upon request. Also, I am enclosing two documents to assist President Preckwinkle's Office and CCHHS:

*Public Health Actions for Immigrant Rights: A Short Guide to Protecting Undocumented Residents and Their Families for the Benefit of Public Health and All Society*¹

Health Effects of Dramatic Societal Events — Ramifications of the Recent Presidential Election, published in the New England Journal of Medicine in June 2017²

President Preckwinkle has publicly stated that Cook County is a sanctuary county. This statement must be backed up with strong action within Cook County Government. There is more work to be done to make CCHHS hospitals and clinics welcoming and affirming places, which is needed to ensure healthcare access, to improve public health, and to advance the wellbeing of the entire County.

The proud tradition and mission of serving all who come to the Cook County Health & Hospital System demands action right now. **Meet the six demands to make this a welcoming, safe, and affirming institution for all! We expect more positive action from our public officials and institutions on these matters and will remain vigilant in monitoring your progress toward meeting these expectations.**¹

¹ Public Health Actions for Immigrant Rights: A Short Guide to Protecting Undocumented Residents and Their Families for the Benefit of Public Health and All Society available at: https://publichealthawakened.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/DPH-Actions-in-Support-of-Undocumented-Populations-UPDATED_2018.02.09.pdf

² Williams, David R., and Medlock, Morgan M. Health Effects of Dramatic Societal Events — Ramifications of the Recent Presidential Election. New England Journal of Medicine. June 8, 2017. Available at: <http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMms1702111>