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Housing and Real Estate Committee of the Chicago City Council
Testimony on behalf of Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Wesley Epplin, MPH, Policy Director

Thank you for this opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

I'm Wesley Epplin. I serve as the policy director at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, a Chicago-based nonprofit focused on advancing health equity. Personally, I've been a Chicago renter for the last 15 years. I live in West Town within the 2nd Ward.

Each of us knows: Having a home enables us to thrive, connect with and contribute to our communities, and live a healthy life. Each of us deserves a home that is affordable, accessible, safe, and healthy.

Without a home, threats to our health abound. Unjust, no-cause, no fault evictions pose a public health threat and contribute to health inequities, the systemic patterns of difference in health status and outcomes measured across different populations that are unfair, unjust, and remediable.

If this ordinance becomes law, in cases in which the tenant or family has done nothing wrong, but the landlord has good cause for the tenant to move, the burden of moving will be lessened by relocation assistance.

Passing the Just Cause for Eviction ordinance will advance health equity, a citywide goal established in *Healthy Chicago 2025*, our city's community health improvement plan led by the Chicago Department of Public Health.

This ordinance will protect Chicagoans from landlords harming their health by evicting them at no fault of the tenants. I will list off several health harms of evictions to highlight what this ordinance will protect against.

- First, experiencing eviction—or worrying about it—is incredibly stressful for individuals and families. Going through an eviction can be traumatic and contribute to mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.
- Chronic stress can worsen other health problems such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, among others.
- Eviction increases the likelihood of multiple moves and reduced quality of housing, or even homelessness, with obvious health harms from lack of shelter. Low-quality housing can harm health by exacerbating asthma or causing lead poisoning, among other issues.
- Evictions cause people to lose belongings and incur costs of replacing the essentials of life.
- Evictions disrupt people's ability to travel to workplaces and to participate in work, contributing to job destabilization and job loss. This causes many negative health effects, since economic wellbeing is critical to people's health.
- Evictions increase maternal depression rates and cause negative effects on children's health and safety—including worse academic performance and behavioral problems.
- Evictions cause displacement, contributing to our city's loss of thousands of Black Chicagoans who move away each year.



- Evictions destabilize communities and disrupt community connections. It's not only an individual or family who experiences loss; neighbors and the broader community also lose relationships that support community wellbeing.
- People's ability to civically engage and to build social cohesion are crucial to advancing community health, but evictions reduce these.
- Finally, evictions both reflect and worsen structural racism and class inequity, which function as fundamental root causes of health inequities.

In sum, evictions cause physical and mental health problems that hurt individuals and families and indeed, the public's health, which the pandemic teaches us, is a critical responsibility of government.

The Just Cause for Eviction ordinance will protect individuals, families, and communities from the public health harms of people being evicted through no fault of their own.

To advance housing justice and protect public health, I urge you to put a stop to no-cause, no-fault evictions in Chicago by passing the Just Cause for Eviction ordinance. Thank you.