



CITY OF CHICAGO



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
ANNA M. VALENCIA

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City Clerk Valencia Joins Community Groups & City Departments to Release *Advancing Equity: First Steps Towards Fines & Fees Reform in Chicago*

The Chicago Fines, Fees and Access Collaborative announced 14 recommendations to reform and rebuild our City's collection, ticketing, fines and fees practices.

Today, City Clerk Anna M. Valencia and the Chicago Fines, Fees and Access Collaborative announced a preliminary set of recommendations to create immediate and sustainable change within the City's fines, fees and ticketing practices. These recommendations were a direct result of the work of the Clerk's Fines, Fees & Access Collaborative that brought together City departments, elected officials, academic institutions, advocates, nonprofits, and Chicago residents to review policies ranging from parking restrictions to the enforcement of the City Sticker.

"I truly believe the best policy is created by having those directly impacted at the table and that's exactly what we did with this Collaborative," said Clerk Valencia. "These recommendations we've released today are community driven. Our role as policymakers is to not only listen but to be bold and take action."

"I want to thank Clerk Valencia and her team for convening these recommendations on ways to improve existing policies and put an end to inequities in our city," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "It's time we end our reliance on a system of regressive fines and fees by moving away from balancing budgets on the backs of our low-income residents and prioritize opportunity for every Chicagoan. We look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders and local leaders to ensure city government makes services more accessible and resources more equitable for all communities."

Over the course of six months, the Collaborative heard directly from residents through bilingual town hall meetings and roundtables as well as an online portal. The Collaborative also collected and analyzed data to help inform their decision-making and better understand the fiscal impacts on both residents and the city. The Collaborative broke up its recommendations into four main

categories: Create Pathways to Compliance; Evaluate Longstanding Practices; Improve Access and Awareness; and Build Equity, Sustainability and Viability.

"I enjoyed being a part of this community-driven process of the Collaborative and look forward to working with my colleagues in City Council to sponsor and support legislation to move these recommendations forward including restructuring payment plans," said 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott Jr.

"As someone who has already sponsored legislation and spent considerable time with the community working on these issues, I am excited to see the Collaborative's work be published. Now is the time to act. 2019 is the year we can make these backwards rules right," said 36th Ward Alderman Gilbert Villegas.

"I look forward to working with the Collaborative to reform our fines and fees systems, while also ensuring that we provide revenue for needed city services. Code enforcement mustn't bankrupt working families across our city," said Finance Chairman Scott Waguespack.

"We know firsthand the hardships families have suffered because of their debt to the City and that the current fines and fees practices were making it nearly impossible for these families to get out of that debt. We applaud the Office of the City Clerk for creating this Collaborative and for bringing community organizations, like COFI/POWER-PAC Illinois, to the table to work together to create sustainable solutions. We're excited to get to work, implementing these recommendations and continuing to establish more recommendations to make our City better for all of our residents," said Rosazlia Grillier, Co-President of POWER-PAC Illinois, an organization of parent leaders in Chicago and Illinois.

"On behalf of the University of Chicago, the School of Social Service Administration, is extremely proud to be a primary academic partner to the Collaborative," said Deborah Gorman-Smith, Dean of the School of Social Service Administration. "Drawing on faculty expertise from across campus and the talent and energy of our students, we are committed to help the Collaborative consider policy changes and reforms to create a more equitable structure that will benefit all Chicagoans."

"This report outlines several important initial recommendations to address policies that create barriers to employment and drive economic instability for many Chicagoans. We look forward to continuing to work alongside advocates, service providers, community members, and elected leaders to push for more equitable policies and practices," said Mari Castaldi, Director of Policy and Advocacy for the Chicago Jobs Council.

The Collaborative's next step will be to brief Aldermen on the recommendations and begin an academic evaluation of some of its practices. It will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to review implementation of recommendations, as well as propose new recommendations.

The recommendations are listed below:

- **Create Pathways to Compliance**
 - Reform City Sticker Tickets
 - Launch a targeted Debt Forgiveness Program
 - Reform Payment Plans

- Reinstigate 15 Day Grace Period
- Eliminate Employment Barriers
- **Evaluate Longstanding Practices**
 - Evaluate the Late Fee Structures
 - Assess the Winter Parking Restriction
 - Review Towing and Impoundment Practices
 - Review Ticketing Policies and Practices
 - Evaluate Street Signage
- **Improve Access & Awareness**
 - Improve Public Education with an Emphasis on Community Collaboration
 - Re-train and Cross-train Front Line Staff
- **Build Sustainability & Viability**
 - Establish a Financial Justice Director Position
 - Conduct Racial Equity Assessments

The Chicago Fines, Fees and Access Collaborative was comprised of the following stakeholders:

- Alderman Ervin (28)
- Alderman Garza (10)
- Alderman Sawyer (6)
- Alderman Scott (24)
- Alderman Villegas (36)
- Former Alderman Foulkes (16)
- Former Alderman Mell (33)
- Former Alderman Pawar (47)
- The City of Chicago Departments of Law, Finance, Budget, Chicago Police Department, Transportation, and the Department of Family and Social Services
- Chicago Jobs Council
- Community Organization and Family Issues (COFI) & POWER PAC
- The Fines & Fees Justice Center
- The Financial Justice Project, San Francisco
- Heartland Alliance

- Loyola Chicago Center for Urban Research and Learning
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
- University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration.
- Woodstock Institute

The report and full set of recommendations can be found on the City Clerk's website:

www.ChiCityClerk.com.

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