

# PRESS NOTICE

For Immediate Release: June 27, 2018

## **Cook County Board of Commissioners Unanimously Approves Resolution Sponsored By Jesús “Chuy” García That Addresses the Harmful Effects of Immigrant Detention and Criminalization**

Chicago, IL – The Cook County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a Resolution proposed by Commissioner Jesús “Chuy” García titled “Addressing the Harmful Effects of Immigrant Child and Family Detention and Calling on the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch to Rescind the ‘Zero Tolerance’ Policy.”

With this Resolution, Cook County calls on Cook County to call on the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch to rescind the Zero Tolerance policy and define a pathway to reunification for impacted families. Furthermore, it is the first County-level resolution to call for a data-sharing memorandum of agreement between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to be retracted in order to ensure the safety of immigrant children in government custody. Furthermore, the Resolution cites demands from immigrant rights advocates across the country to limit funding towards immigration enforcement.

The ongoing separation and detention of immigrant families entering the U.S. has resulted in a national outcry condemning the Trump Administration’s strategic criminalization of immigrants and further mass incarceration of people of color. As noted by University of Chicago law student Anna Duke, who read a statement on behalf of the International Human Rights Clinic at the University of Chicago School of Law, “Each year, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) spends 2 billion in taxpayer dollars for immigration detention. As a country, we have the world’s largest prison population and the world’s largest immigration detention system, and yet President Trump’s new plan will involve expanding our massive incarceration system.”

The Board also heard testimony from health and legal experts. Dr. Nivia Lubin Johnson from the National Medical Association described the negative socio-

emotional impacts of the policies and stated that “Emotional neglect has lifelong consequences on health outcomes...especially for people of color.” Dr. Dana Rusch from the Institute for Juvenile Research at the University of Illinois at Chicago detailed the toxic stress that immigrants face and told Commissioners “We need a child first recommendation and a public health approach to public policy.”

Jajah Wu, Supervising Attorney with the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights, detailed the obstacles to family reunification and the reality that many parents who were separated from their children have already been deported. Furthermore, she stated: “the system is not prepared nor does it have the infrastructure to track families,” and cited the urgency of families currently in limbo. Citing the recent federal injunction that largely prohibits the federal government from separating families, Ms. Wu stated: “the injunction will not necessarily end parent-child separations, or stop the government from detaining families together. We know, and experts across the country agree, that incarcerating families together is not the answer to separating families.”

Susan Gzesh, director of the Pozen Family Center for Human Rights urged the Board to “act locally and think globally” and to prioritize “the treatment of children whose lives have been impacted by law enforcement.” Renee Hatcher of the John Marshall Law School decried the federal government’s practices in describing the “zero tolerance policy as a violation of international human rights law” and further stating that family separation is ingrained in the country’s violent history - “this country has long established a practice of separating families [via Japanese internment camps, treatment of Native Americans, and slavery].

Commissioner Garcia thanked all Board members for their support and highlighted the detrimental mental health impacts of these policies. Fellow Commissioners voiced their support of the Resolution, many of them empathizing with the intense hardship of separated families, their right to due process, and expressed disappointment in the government’s apparent disdain for people in need of asylum.

The Meeting took place Wednesday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at the Cook County Board Room, 118 N. Clark, Room 569, Chicago, IL 60602.

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