To the Residents of Cook County:

I am pleased to present to you the Cook County Executive Budget Recommendation for fiscal year 2017.

This proposed $4.4 billion budget works to address the County’s long term fiscal health while avoiding devastating public safety and health cuts during a time of crisis in Cook County’s criminal justice system and amidst surging violence across our communities.

The FY2017 Executive Budget Recommendation is highlighted by our efforts to permanently sustain the County’s reduced jail population by working on the demolition of numerous divisions of Cook County Jail, continue the transition from inpatient to more effective and less-costly outpatient care at the Cook County Health and Hospitals System (CCHHS), and reduce our real estate footprint by nearly 1 million square feet. We will continue to strive to do more for our residents with fewer resources.

The budget takes steps toward long-term fiscal responsibility by including a number of tough decisions that will create a strong financial foundation while preserving critical public health and safety services. The County will be reducing the overall workforce as measured by full-time equivalents (FTE) positions by approximately 1% across the County in FY2017. Added to previous reductions, the County’s overall workforce will be nearly 10% smaller since I took office in 2010. These changes unfortunately required some difficult decisions and for the second year, the County was forced to resort to layoffs of personnel, which is an incredibly difficult decision for any executive to make -- and one that we do not make lightly.

Another difficult, but necessary, decision was to move forward with a sweetened beverage tax. Enacting a one penny per fluid ounce tax on sweetened beverages has long been a priority of health advocates as the prevalence of diabetes and related health disorders rise across our society; at the same time, the tax would provide much-needed revenue for crucial public safety and public health services for County residents. These services include a new community based outreach effort on diabetes education and nutritional impact, along with a doubling of our investment in community based
anti-violence programming. As part of this budget, we are committed to providing our residents and businesses with greater certainty around the County’s tax structure, including a freeze on County taxes over the three-year planning horizon that guided our process for crafting this budget.

Based on our fiscal structure, and the large number of revenue sources that decline year-over year, the County is confronted with a decline of $62.2 million in revenues beyond the property and sales tax in FY2017 without the proposed tax. Such a continual decline in revenues would require elimination of 1,000 public safety positions over a three-year planning horizon. This level of impact on the public safety system would be dangerous and at the worst time as the County is working with the City of Chicago, community leaders, and other stakeholders to reduce violence and reform our criminal justice system.

In the Public Health arena, we are continuing to modernize the Cook County Health and Hospitals System. Through our CountyCare program our uninsured population has dropped to the lowest level on record, declining from 56% in 2012 to approximately 33% in 2016. This has had a dramatic impact on the FY2017 operating tax allocation to the Health System, which will be $111 million. This also represents a $280 million reduction, more than a 70% decline, from the year before I took office.

This is a reasonable, responsive and responsible budget that can provide lasting financial stability. I look forward to the support of residents as we continue to deliver a more modern, effective and efficient Cook County government.

Sincerely,
Toni Preckwinkle
President
Cook County Board of Commissioners
In FY 2016, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) presented the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award with Special Performance Measures Recognition to the Department of Budget and Management Services for Cook County’s annual budget for the fiscal year beginning December 1, 2015.

In order to receive this award, a governmental unit must publish a budget document that meets program criteria as a policy document, an operations guide, a financial plan and a communication device.

The award is valid for the 2016 fiscal year. Cook County believes the 2017 budget continues to conform to program requirements, and the County has submitted it to GFOA to determine its eligibility for another award.
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Richard R. Boykin ............................................................................... (D)-1st District
Robert Steele ....................................................................................(D)-2nd District
Jerry Butler ....................................................................................... (D)-3rd District
Stanley Moore ..................................................................................(D)-4th District
Deborah Sims .....................................................................................(D)-5th District
Edward M. Moody ............................................................................. (D)-6th District
Jesus G. Garcia ..................................................................................(D)-7th District
Luis Arroyo Jr. .................................................................................. (D)-8th District
Peter N. Silvestri ................................................................................ (R)-9th District
Bridget Gainer ..................................................................................(D)-10th District
John P. Daley .................................................................................... (D)-11th District
John A. Fritchey ................................................................................ (D)-12th District
Larry Suffredin ................................................................................ (D)-13th District
Gregg Goslin ..................................................................................... (R)-14th District
Timothy O. Schneider ....................................................................... (R)-15th District
Jeffrey R. Tobolski ............................................................................ (D)-16th District
Sean M. Morrison ............................................................................. (R)-17th District
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HONORABLE MICHAEL M. CABONARGI
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