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City of Chicago Receives \$1.8 Million in New Private and Public Donations for Flexible Housing Pool

Chicago and Cook County Flexible Housing Pool doubles funding with first-ever private investments to support efforts to reduce homelessness

CHICAGO—The City of Chicago today announced the expansion of the Chicago and Cook County Flexible Housing Pool (FHP) with a total of more than \$1.8 million in new investments, including the first private investments in the program. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois and Advocate Aurora Health are investing a combined \$1.5 million over the next three years to support the City and its partners' collaborative efforts to align housing, tenancy and wraparound support services for those most at-risk for homelessness. Also, UI Health has pledged a \$281,000 contribution this year and \$350,000 for FY 2020 for the FHP.

"Homelessness should be everyone's concern, and that is why we are joining forces with private and public entities to support a subsidy that quickly houses and provides supportive services for some of the hardest-to-reach homeless residents," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "We are grateful for those hospitals and organizations who have come forward to help address homelessness, and we hope others will follow suit."

The City and its partners have collaborated to align funding, including the first-ever private funds, toward a common goal through the Flexible Housing Program. Under the FHP, the City of Chicago is able to quickly house and provide supportive services to some of Chicago's most vulnerable populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness who frequently cycle through the criminal justice system and often utilize hospital emergency rooms for care.

"We recognize that lack of access to stable, affordable housing, transportation, jobs and healthy food can negatively impact a person's health and wellbeing," said Maurice Smith, president, Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC). Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois is a division of HCSC. "This investment is part of our continued commitment to improve the health of our communities by supporting programs and services that give people the tools they need to improve their health and realize their full potential."

The FHP pairs wraparound health and social services with a housing subsidy to support residents experiencing homelessness with a focus on super-users of local crisis response systems such as hospital emergency rooms, police stations, paramedic calls, jails and shelters. Since the implementation of the program began in March of 2019, the FHP has housed 26 residents who were previously experiencing homelessness.

“We invested in this program because we know helping people live well is about more than what happens when they see their doctor. Having a safe place to live is a big part of that whole-person care,” said Advocate Aurora Health Vice President of Population Health Dr. Alvia Siddiqi. “We’re always looking for innovative ways to attend to important social needs that are fundamental to managing population health, and we’re proud to be a part of this effort.”

The FHP was created in 2018 with a dedicated \$500,000 from the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund (AHOF), \$500,000 in 2018 City corporate funds, and \$800,000 in housing and urban development funds, provided by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA).

“We are very grateful for the growing list of diverse partners at the table to help the innovative Flexible Housing Pool become more than just an idea,” said Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “We took a best practice from Los Angeles, and really made it something that works in Chicago.”

Overall, the City and CHA have pledged a total of \$5.4 million in project support of the FHP over three years. In May of 2019, Cook County Health pledged a \$1 million investment into the FHP. Cook County Health treats 83% of the single adult homeless population in Chicago, as identified through a data match between Cook County Health records and the Chicago Homeless Management Information System.

“CHA is pleased to support the FHP because it allows us to provide additional housing options for some of our city’s most vulnerable residents,” said CHA CEO Eugene E. Jones, Jr.

The City’s broader vision for the FHP is to grow and sustain the fund and eventually expand the number of people served by securing non-traditional and cross-sector investors such as hospitals, health care systems and philanthropic organizations. Other supporters of the program include:

- The Chicago Community Trust, J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Michael Reese Health Trust, and Otho S.A. Sprague Memorial Institute provide philanthropic support for planning and foundational development of the FHP.
- Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) provides collaboration and project management leadership across partners for the FHP
- Chicago Department of Public Health, Illinois Public Health Institute, CountyCare, Housing Authority of Cook County, Sage Health Strategy and the Flexible Housing Pool Lived Experience Advisory Council provide critical advisory support to the FHP.
- The Center for Housing and Health (CHH) leads housing administration and support services for tenants for the FHP.

“We have a responsibility to help all of our neighbors, especially those who are pushed to the margins. With the FHP, we are one step closer to a region where everyone has a place to call home,” said Peter Toepfer, CHH’s Executive Director. “CHH is proud to be part of this collaborative effort to develop creative solutions to complex problems.”

Mayor Lightfoot remains committed to supporting residents who are homeless and to ensuring all residents have access to affordable housing. Earlier this month, Mayor Lightfoot announced a new and

improved Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) to direct Chicago's affordable housing resources where they are needed most. A draft of the QAP is available at www.chicago.gov/qap. Public comment on the draft plan will be accepted for 30 days at HousingDevelopment@cityofchicago.org. The final QAP will be issued on Monday, September 9, 2019. The new QAP represents the initial step in creating safe, affordable housing in every neighborhood across the entire city.

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