

Good morning, Chairman Ervin, Vice Chair Lee, and members of City Council. I am Dr. Simbo Ige, Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH).

The three Ps of Public Health are: **Prevent, Protect and Promote**. As a local public health department, CDPH is mandated to prevent diseases, protect the environment and ensure food safety, promote health and linkage to care. Prevention is often invisible; I will shed some light on how we detect and mitigate threats to the health of Chicagoans.

**Preventing diseases.** CDPH was trusted to keep thousands of delegates safe during the Democratic National Convention. We prepared the healthcare system to handle scenarios from bioterrorism to COVID-19. We monitored disease activity and ensured compliance to food safety regulations. This is why no one heard of any disease outbreaks. We prevented them with our preparation. Our timely response to the measles outbreak earlier this year limited the spread and number of cases to only 57; it could have been hundreds. This prevented school closures, the economy was unencumbered, and the city remained safe. Our response earned national recognition for promptness and effectiveness. Every day we monitor 70 different communicable diseases. This year we responded to 261 outbreaks in healthcare settings, shelters, long term care facilities, correctional facilities, schools and daycares, responding within 24 hours and containing each instance.

**Protecting communities from health risks.** Consenting new parents in Chicago receive home visits from public health nurses as part of our Family Connects program. This year, 2,200 families benefitted from this support. Several hundred sudden infant deaths were prevented through safe sleep practices and remediation of health hazards. By August, we inspected 768 and remediated 245 homes for lead. We kept homes safe, families healthy, and communities thriving. We ensured that over 15,000 food establishments and several hundred food vendors at special events adhered to food safety regulations. This prevented hundreds of food-borne outbreaks and contributing to the economic vitality of our food and tourism sectors. As a result, those businesses continue to serve Chicagoans and economic vitality is preserved. Safe food tourism contributes to Chicago being voted the best big city for eight years in a row. Every day we ensure food, air, and homes are safe. This year, we have already received over 7,275 service requests through 311, mostly to address concerns about food establishments and environmental health issues, 87.4 percent of these requests were resolved within seven days. Our city is safer because we have a robust public health department.

**Promoting health and well-being.** Our summer opioid overdose response led to a 23 percent reduction in overdoses and almost 50 percent reduction in opioid mortality, compared to the same time last year. More West Side residents are alive today as a result. Thank you to the over 40 community organizations, the Mayor's Office, Chairwoman Rodriguez-Sanchez, members of the Committee on Health and Human Relations, and West Side Alders for their ongoing support. All public schools have benefitted from our oral, vision and sexual health services; more than 50,000 students received services this year and are able to better focus on their studies. The supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children provided nutritional support to over 17,000 families. During this summer, more than 30,000 children participated in Playstreets, a health promoting initiative that improves physical, mental and social skills. We collaborated with many stakeholders and are grateful for their commitment to bring the Mental Health System Expansion to life, including Mayor Brandon Johnson, Chairwoman Rodriguez-Sanchez, the Health Committee, Budget Office, Human Resources, Fleet and Facilities, public safety

departments, and hundreds of community members. We hired new staff, expanded mental health services in three locations, and expanded our CARE behavioral crisis response team. Critically, all of this was accomplished without disrupting provider continuity for folks receiving care through the current system.

Outside of mental health, the majority of our work is supported by grants. More than 82 percent of CDPH's budget comes from federal grants. More than \$500 million in one-time grants will end by 2026. Sustainability is therefore a top priority for CDPH. In anticipation, we have started to explore creative solutions, in partnership with community organizations, and collaborations across government. I look forward to working with Mayor's Office, this body, and our county, state, and federal partners to support public health.

Looking forward, we have developed action plans to address identified community health needs with a focus on health equity and closing the racial life expectancy gap. The causes of premature death are chronic disease, homicide, opioid overdose, infectious disease, and infant mortality. We also recognize mental illness contributes to premature mortality, making it a priority area for action.

In 2025, we will address these six drivers of the life expectancy gap for the most impacted people and places. The history and persistence of residential segregation in Chicago limits access to resources, creating obstacles to health. CDPH will ensure that the South and West Side neighborhoods—where lower life expectancy is concentrated – benefit from all our programs. We will implement a data-driven, assets-based, hyper-local, collective impact approach. I call this precision public health, and I have seen it work. Next year's action plan will leverage existing resources and partnership in the following ways:

- Engaging community health workers and community partners to increase access to chronic disease prevention services, nutritious food, physical activity, and smoking cessation supports.
- Disrupting cycles of violence through hospital-based interventions for survivors and highlighting placed-based community safety measures like tree planting and vacant lot greening.
- Further reducing opioid overdoses through hyperlocal engagement and promoting the use of safe medications that minimize cravings, lessen withdrawal systems, and can reverse overdoses.
- Limiting the spread of communicable diseases, particularly respiratory viruses, through tailored messaging for communities of color.
- Promoting infant and maternal health by increasing WIC enrollment through partnerships, data modernization, and increased staff support.
- Promoting mental health by training more community leaders to identify danger signs and connect loved ones to care.

I look forward to making CDPH's work visible and sharing progress next year.

I will end by thanking the CDPH team, other City departments, the Mayor's Office, and City Council. Thank you to our public health system partners, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, researchers, advocates and many other collaborators. We remain resolute in our mission to support the health and well-being of all Chicagoans.