CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

October 21, 2026

Mayor Brandon Johnson's Prepared Remarks
FY2027 Chicago's Fair Share Budget

Good morning, thank you all for joining us.

Allow me to give particular thanks to my Budget and Finance teams, Policy team, Commissioners, and the thousands of dedicated public servants who keep Chicago running.

Acting Budget Director Jonathan Ernst, Chief Financial Officer Ashlee Gabrysch, City Comptroller Michael Belsky, Chief of Policy Jung Yoon and their teams have spent countless hours developing our fiscal year 2027 budget and finding enduring, sustainable solutions for the greatest city in the world, Chicago.

To the community organizations, labor unions, cultural institutions, social service agencies, civic and philanthropic partners, business leaders, and members of our faith communities joining us today, thank you. You are essential partners in the work of building a safe, affordable Chicago. You bring people together, strengthen our neighborhoods, create pathways to success, and remind us that the future of our city is a shared responsibility.

We are particularly appreciative of the bold visions you bring to how we govern. Your organizing is directly reflected in this year's budget. And as you keep organizing and keep pushing your elected officials, myself included, I am grateful for your steadfast dedication to the people of Chicago.

Last but certainly not least, I must thank my family. I often speak about my love for my wife, Stacie, and three wonderful children. And today, I want to speak about my children, and I also want to speak about your children. About *our* children.

James Baldwin said that the children are always ours, every single one of them. He was right. He also said that he was beginning to suspect that whoever is incapable of recognizing that may be incapable of morality.

But I know that everyone in this room recognizes what we owe our children. We owe them responsible investment in programs that work.

Whether they are CEOs or childcare workers, over and over, Chicagoans say that they want the same things for our city. They want affordable homes and good schools. They want to be safe, and they want to feel safe. They want to have meaningful work that pays enough to be able to afford groceries and medical care, and to not worry about making rent. They want reliable public transportation, clean parks, and beautiful libraries.

Plenty of people in Chicago have all those things already, and then some. There is more than enough to go around, and there are plenty of reasons to ensure that everyone receives their fair share.

Our futures are tied together. When our neighbors thrive, our communities grow stronger. And when our communities grow stronger, all of Chicago succeeds. Success starts by sowing block level investments across all of our 77 neighborhoods.

Everyone single one of our children, in every single neighborhood, deserves a city that invests in their future. That is the promise at the heart of the Budget I've introduced today: the Fair Share Budget.

My 2027 budget ensures every Chicagoan receives their fair share of the investments, services, and opportunities that define our city, funded by responsible spending cuts that protect essential services and by asking wealthy corporations to pay their fair share.

A Fair Share Budget means delivering for our people in the ways that matter most in their everyday lives.

People feel government most acutely at the local level. And unfortunately, they feel local government most acutely when it is absent. People notice when trees are untrimmed, and potholes are unfilled. They notice ghost buses and closed schools. They notice absence.

When government works the way it should, we don't think twice about it. Removing garbage or a tree stump shouldn't be a special occasion. It should be something every Chicagoan can count on. Every neighborhood ought to reap all the rewards of living in what the world recognizes as the most beautiful and climate resilient city on the planet.

In my conversations with alderpeople about this year's budget, one message came through loud and clear: our communities deserve a city government that shows up, delivers, and gets the basics right, every single day. I want to thank the members of City Council who met with me to share their communities' priorities. From Norwood Park to South Shore, the

message was the same: people want their trees trimmed, their potholes filled, their streets maintained, and their neighborhoods cared for. These are basic city services, and our residents deserve a government that delivers them.

Chicagoans work hard. They pay their taxes, raise their families, and do their part to keep our communities strong. They should see their tax dollars come back to their neighborhoods and make a real difference in their lives.

That is why, inspired by the leadership of Alderwomen Clay and Ramirez, our Fair Share Budget doubles our investment in the Department of Streets and Sanitation's Quality of Life program. That means growing the teams working across our city to clean vacant lots and clear debris. We are adding ten forestry crews to trim 15,000 more trees and ensure the full force of City government shows up when severe weather strikes and devastates communities. No neighborhood should have to fight to be cared for, and no community should ever feel forgotten by its government.

In fact, people should feel like their governments are caring for them proactively. This care becomes ever more important in the face of climate change and the associated harms. Severe weather impacts everyone, but some communities have more resilient infrastructure than others. That's why the Fair Share Budget invests in infrastructure that addresses the root causes of flooding and helps communities recover from severe weather events, while focusing that investment in the neighborhoods most vulnerable to climate change.

We are also expanding Smart Streets citywide, because the freedom to move safely through our city should belong to every Chicagoan. I want to thank Chairmen Vasquez and La Spata for their leadership in making this possible. Together, we are keeping bike lanes clear, buses moving, and bus stops accessible—so working parents can get home to their children, seniors can travel safely, and young people can get to school without fear.

Whether you're walking in Lincoln Park, catching a bus in Brighton Park, riding a bike, or driving to work, your safety matters. Your time matters. And your ability to reach the people, places, and opportunities you love matters.

And just as every Chicagoan deserves the freedom to move safely through our city, every family deserves the peace of mind that comes with feeling safe in their own neighborhood. From day one, we have been guided by a fundamental belief: every Chicagoan deserves to be safe, and true safety is built on trust, opportunity, and community investment. That

means funding infrastructure. It also means constitutional policing that earns the trust of our residents, and investing in the people, programs, and resources that prevent violence before it happens.

Our vision for public safety is clear: a Chicago where every family feels safe, every young person has a future, and every neighborhood has the resources to thrive.

Despite the Trump administration cutting critical funding meant to support and protect our communities, I'm grateful to say that, here in Chicago, our work is making a difference.

We're seeing crime come down with record lows in homicides, including in neighborhoods that have endured far too much violence and far too little investment for generations. That progress means lives saved, families kept whole, and more young people with the chance to grow up and reach their full potential.

But we can't take that progress for granted. Behind every number is a person, a family, a community. One shooting is one too many. One homicide is one too many. No family should have to bury a loved one because of gun violence.

And so the Fair Share Budget continues putting our vision into action—uniting City departments to prevent violence, supporting our police officers in protecting communities and solving crimes, and investing in trusted community leaders who stop violence before it starts. Through the leadership of Alderman Mosely and the advocacy of Live Free, we've established the Department of Community Wellness and Safety and the Office of Gun Violence Reduction to centralize and coordinate across the City's violence reduction efforts.

Building safer communities requires more than coordination. It requires investing in the people who know their communities best.

So, the Fair Share Budget prioritizes funding community violence intervention, to stop violence before it starts. We are making a historic $40.6 million investment in CVI, activating 390 street outreach workers and over 800 peacekeepers across Chicago, including on the CTA.

Last year's investment in street outreach has supported CVI teams across 38 communities. These are trusted leaders who show up for their neighbors, interrupt cycles of violence, and save lives. These teams have resolved nearly 2,600 conflicts, preventing situations from escalating into violence. That is the promise of our Fair Share Budget: giving every

community the resources needed to build the peace, safety, and future they and their children deserve.

Our record high community investments in people pay off in the form of record low rates of violence for whole communities.

Consider Bo Deal, a Senior Manager of Field Operations at one of our partner organizations, Metropolitan Peace Initiatives. Bo was released from prison in 2004 and has worked in CVI for over a decade. In 2023, with support from MPI, he became the first member of their street outreach team to complete an undergraduate degree. He continues to provide resources and support across East and West Garfield Park.

Bo described the ripple effect of CVI investment to my office. "Who better to touch the people in the community than the people who have been a part of this community and actually made it out to change?" he said. "Nobody is more effective than a person like that."

Another CVI worker, James Mitchell, describes himself as "living proof that if given the right chances, opportunities, and resources, people can change."

When James talks about the importance of government and community support for people seeking growth and second chances, he is not suggesting anything unreasonable. If he were born in the Gold Coast, instead of on the West Side, those opportunities would exist for him already. It is our job to ensure those opportunities exist in every neighborhood.

This work should start as early as it can. Alderperson Fuentes knows this. That is why she has fought so hard for youth peacekeeping, and why we are investing in fifty youth peacekeepers to lead the work of building safer, stronger communities.

Because as I have often said, community safety is not just the absence of violence. It is the presence of opportunity. It is knowing you can grow up and put down roots in the neighborhood you love, stay close to your aging parents and lifelong friends, and build a future for your children.

That is why another pillar of my work in City Hall has been direct investment in our young people and the people who care for them.

We will continue our historic $7 million investment to raise wages for thousands of early childhood educators. The Chicagoans who care for our children deserve fair pay, dignity,

and respect. Families deserve access to consistent, affordable childcare. And all our children deserve every possible opportunity.

Next year, I'm expanding Chicago Youth Works, because a young person with a paycheck, a mentor, and somewhere to be is a young person with a future. And a young person with opportunity ahead of them is a young person who fosters growth and safety in their community.

Last year, we saw double digit declines in shootings and homicides in the five community areas with the highest number of youth jobs.

To keep building on that success, this summer we hired over 33,000 young people, a city record. But the demand far exceeded our funded spots. There were 56,000 applications for Chicago Youth Works positions. Young people in every corner of Chicago are calling for these opportunities—to work, to lead, and to make their communities safer. This past summer, in the 38th Ward, 366 young people were hired—63% of ward applicants. In the 29th Ward, 852 young people were hired—only 52% of the young people who applied in that ward. In every corner of Chicago, demand for opportunity outpaces access to opportunity.

And so, the Fair Share Budget will invest an additional $24 million, empowering the city to hire 40,000 young people next year.

Opportunities must go beyond employment – Chicago is a city for curiosity, exploration and learning. That is why the Chicago Fair Share Budget fully funds and resources our Chicago Public Libraries, without raising property taxes.

Responsible stewardship of our resources is our obligation to future generations. As I have said before, our current financial difficulties come from irresponsible management of our resources.

Over thirty years ago, when I was walking across the stage at my high school graduation, occupants of City Hall were skipping payments into our pension fund. Today, I am making those payments in their stead.

We owe it to the young people of Chicago to invest wisely, so that when they look back and think about what our city was doing during their high school graduation, they do not think about missed pension payments. That's not a future we should strive to build. Instead, let

them look back on the skills they built at their summer job or the art they made at the library.

When my children look back thirty years from now, I want them to look at a time where together, we made the investments necessary for our collective future. And I want them to be reaping the rewards of those investments, instead of dealing with problems we passed down to them in the futile hope of avoiding them altogether.

The long-term impacts of the Fair Share Budget will be transformative. Our work is future-focused, across every possible metric. And that future begins with something every family deserves: a safe, stable, affordable place to call home.

As we continue to expand our investments in affordable housing, we are simultaneously prioritizing climate resilience through our Green Social Housing Program. We have appointed a board of housing experts and community leaders to oversee our $135 million revolving loan fund, and work is underway to identify and prepare our first sustainable, affordable developments.

We are turning the promise of housing affordability into homes Chicago families can count on for generations. I want to thank Alderwoman Manaa-Hoppenworth for her leadership in making this possible.

We have a responsibility to help more Chicagoans find and keep a safe place to call home. And in the past three years, in partnership with the city, more than 10,000 affordable homes have been built, preserved, rehabbed, or entered the development pipeline. But in addition to constructing new residences, the Fair Share Budget invests an additional $15 million in homelessness services, $13 million in rental assistance, and $2 million in the Flexible Housing Pool. These targeted investments, tirelessly advocated for by organizers with Keep Chicago Housed, will reach more than 3,000 residents, keeping families in their homes, in the neighborhoods they love, and close to the people who matter most to them.

This is fiscal responsibility, because it is guaranteed to pay dividends in terms of public safety and stability for all. The Flexible Housing Pool alone provided supportive housing to 1,750 people across 998 households. After 12 months, 92 percent of residents who received this support were able to stay in their homes, and participants saw an 82 percent reduction in contact with the criminal legal system.

Investment in affordable housing is investment in community safety, and investment in our shared future.

And while we are investing in ending homelessness and building more homes, we are also fighting to keep families from losing their homes in the first place. As a result of the advocacy of Southside Together and the leadership of Alderman Yancy, the Fair Share Budget invests $2.5 million in the Jackson Park Property Tax Relief Pilot to help longtime homeowners stay in their homes as property values rise. Because the families who built and sustained these neighborhoods deserve to share in their future, not be displaced by it.

And keeping our communities strong means investing not only in housing, but in the health and well-being of the people inside.

That is why the Fair Share Budget funds mental health care for all Chicagoans. This, too, is crime prevention. This, too, is economic growth, the kind of investment that makes a city competitive for business, big and small alike.

Since her very first day in office, Chairwoman Rodriguez-Sanchez has reminded this body, time and again, that when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, what they need is treatment, not trauma—and care, not criminalization.

Together, we launched CARE, an emergency response program that sends trained mental health professionals to people in crisis. We have now expanded CARE citywide. The Fair Share Budget continues building on that investment, one that has already begun to pay off for Chicagoans in crisis.

Consider Raul Alburto, a Chicagoan who fell into a deep depression following a traumatic encounter with federal immigration authorities, compounded by family conflict. He felt hopeless and questioned whether life was worth living.

Our CARE team responded and met Raul with patience and compassion, earning his trust and helping him get to the hospital for the care he needed.

In the weeks that followed, Raul stayed connected with the CARE team and enrolled in an outpatient treatment program. Today, he is working as a lead maintenance technician, looking for an apartment of his own, and rebuilding his life.

The CARE team showed up for Raul when he was struggling to see a way forward. But care cannot begin and end with an emergency. Chicagoans need both proactive and reactive mental health care, and the Fair Share Budget funds those resources.

Our seven city-run mental health clinics provide therapy, psychiatric services, case management, and healing arts programming. From 2023 to 2025, the number of services delivered through these clinics has increased by more than 52%.

That growth tells us that more Chicagoans are turning to our city's mental health clinics for support.

And we are dedicated to meeting that need, despite devastating federal cuts. The Trump administration has targeted Chicago's public health infrastructure, attempting to roll back federal funding that supported disease prevention, emergency preparedness, and public health.

But the Fair Share Budget protects the lifesaving work of the Chicago Department of Public Health. And we know these investments matter. After the pandemic drove life expectancy down across our city, Chicagoans are now living longer than ever before, with life expectancy reaching a record 79.5 years.

Black Chicagoans have seen the greatest gains, but significant racial life expectancy gaps persist. On average, despite historic gains, non-Black Chicagoan can expect to live 9.4 years longer than Black residents of our city.

No one's ZIP code or race should determine how long they live. We are fighting for the kind of investment that will give my neighbors in Austin nearly a decade more time with their loved ones. And we will keep fighting until every Chicagoan has the opportunity to live a long, healthy life.

Everyone deserves access to the resources that are abundant in some parts of our city and heartbreakingly absent for others. Everyone deserves the life that comes from the presence of those resources.

Building communities where people can live longer, healthier lives also means creating the economic opportunities that allow families and neighborhoods to thrive. We know what investment can mean for a neighborhood. On 75th Street, entrepreneur Tarsha Jackson transformed a vacant church into Roots Southern Cuisine, a soul food restaurant honoring

the neighborhood's civil rights legacy. My administration helped bring her vision to life with a Neighborhood Opportunity Fund grant.

And this business is so much more than a restaurant. It is a livelihood for Tarsha, another place for neighbors to gather, and a way to keep the history and traditions alive through food. Better quality of life comes from the presence of gathering places and fresh food.

In this year's budget, we are continuing to invest in small businesses, revitalizing nearly $20 million from the Catalyst Fund that sat unused for years. Through this transformation, we will expand access to capital for local entrepreneurs and support neighborhood investments like community centers, educational facilities, and other essential resources. We are unlocking development and economic opportunity.

As we balanced the Fair Share Budget, we heeded calls to prioritize savings and efficiencies. We have heeded these calls across my tenure. Over the past three budgets, we've found $740 million in savings and efficiencies without layoffs. The Fair Share Budget will save another $120 million through corporate cost reduction initiatives, while protecting services and keeping city workers on the job. To be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, we are renegotiating contracts, consolidating real estate, and modernizing our fleet.

And in the last year, organizational improvements to debt collection practices resulted in a $500 million increase in recouped debt. We did not resort to predatory practices or selling residents' personal information to third parties. We used data-driven strategies to collect debt from those who are most able to pay, and to provide relief programs to help people who are already stretched thin settle what they owe, because that is the fiscally responsible approach.

Hundreds of thousands of residents have participated in our relief programs, bringing tens of millions of dollars back into the City that we otherwise might not have collected. In 2027, we anticipate at least $6 million in new collection from our Vehicle Debt Amnesty Program, while delivering relief for Chicagoans.

And we are also increasing savings by answering the call to repair old harms. Days ago, this body approved legacy settlements for those who were harmed by former Police Detective Guevara during an era of wrongful convictions. This was the right and just decision. But we know there are more legacy cases pending.

Investing in our residents means recognizing there are individuals and families who are still suffering from harms of the past. Delaying these cases prolongs suffering for families—and passes ever-growing legal expenses on to future generations of Chicagoans.

By making timely settlements now, we can give resolution to those for whom it has long been delayed while also shielding taxpayers from the rising costs of expensive litigation that could otherwise go on for many years.

These settlements will save Chicago between $300 and $400 million compared to extended litigation.

But savings alone aren't enough. You cannot cut your way to a better future, because a better future requires investment, not cuts. You cannot keep asking our communities to make do with less and expect to deliver on the promises we've made to the people we serve.

Throughout American history, everyday people have fought for their fair share. And when working people organize, they win. Just look at the nurses recently fired by Prime Healthcare at hospitals across the Chicago area. Most have been rehired, and they won their organizing drives. Because when working people stand together, they have the power to win. And when they win, we all win.

But all too often, there has been pushback.

In 1987, in his inaugural address, Mayor Harold Washington reminded us that Chicago stood at a fork in the road. We could choose the difficult but necessary work of rebuilding our city, or we could take the easy road—a road that would only lead us backward.

The year prior, he had introduced his own Fair Share Budget. That budget included many of the things I am fighting for today. It called for investment in mental health care, and investment in the neighborhoods that had been too-long ignored and deprioritized. And it did so while the federal government, led by Ronald Reagan, was slashing taxes on the wealthiest Americans and corporations, and slashing investment in everyday people.

Following Mayor Washington's untimely death, our city reverted to prioritizing corporate profits and measuring success by number of cranes in the Loop--- forgetting that the success of our city cannot be measured in one neighborhood. Our success must be measured by the presence of investment in every part of Chicago, addressing every need.

Now as then, across America, local governments are confronted with challenges that reach far beyond their city limits. Growing wealth disparities, endless wars overseas, and rising costs are placing enormous pressure on families and communities.

One year ago, President Trump unleashed Operation Midway Blitz to terrorize our communities, tear families apart, and threaten the livelihoods of working people and small businesses. In addition to the trauma and physical harm inflicted on our city, a recent study showed Operation Midway Blitz cost Cook County $1.26 billion.

And the harm inflicted by the Trump administration extends far beyond Operation Midway Blitz. From the fear and trauma inflicted on our communities to the economic hardship facing working families, Chicagoans are paying the price for an administration that puts the interests of the wealthy and powerful ahead of the people who make this city run.

In the second quarter of this year, corporate profit margins increased by $384 billion, reaching an annualized $4.7 trillion, while the share of business revenue going back to workers fell to a record low of 52.9%.

President Trump and his allies have compounded this imbalance with massive corporate tax breaks, allowing corporations to pay an estimated $137 billion less in taxes this year. And while corporations enjoy another handout, his administration is cutting the very programs working families depend on, from Medicaid and food assistance to affordable health care.

History does not have to repeat itself. We do not have to allow corporate interests to lobby us into meeting these federal cuts with municipal abandonment. Instead, we could learn from those who came before us, and allocate resources to confront our structural challenges so that there does not have to be a third Mayor trying to ensure every Chicagoan has their fair share.

We cannot address structural problems without structural solutions. And let us be very explicit: disinvestment did not happen by accident. It was created by racism, and redlining. And today, there are still 90% more Black Chicagoans in redlined communities compared to the surrounding areas.

The only way to remedy that kind of intentional creation of poverty is to intentionally create sustainable growth, sustainable pathways to generational wealth. And the only way to create those things is to invest in them.

So when people talk about how Chicago needs to address poverty and build hospitals but refuse to acknowledge the only pathway to doing so is by asking giant corporations to allocate a drop in their ocean of resources to make that investment possible—I would politely ask those people to be fiscally responsible.

Our city can only reach its full potential when it invests intentionally, to remedy equally intentional disinvestment. We have an abundance of resources to invest. And you all know who holds them.

It is so clear who it is fair to ask to shoulder a little bit more. It is clear to nearly 90% of Chicagoans. I am grateful to everyone who participated in our 2027 Budget Engagement Roundtables and took the time to share their priorities for Chicago's future.

On this point, the people were united. When asked which revenue options they supported, 88% of adult respondents and 74% of young people chose increasing taxes on large corporations. Across generations, Chicagoans made it clear that they believe the largest corporations should contribute their fair share toward the services and investments our communities need.

We will heed the call of the nearly 90 percent of Chicagoans who spoke with one powerful voice: we must hold large corporations accountable for their share of our collective future.

The Fair Share Budget will require the largest Chicago corporations located outside of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Areas to chip in just $25 per month for each Chicago-based employee, to help invest in our neighborhoods, our people and our long-term financial health, and to incentivize economic development in Chicago, particularly in historically neglected communities.

Large corporations spend huge amounts of money recruiting employees and retaining them through a variety of frivolous perks, from free lunches to health and wellness credits. Let's be honest. The best way to recruit and retain employees here in the city of Chicago is to ensure our city has affordable housing, good transit, safe streets, and robust services. The *Equitable Employer Tax* is a smart investment for all of us.

And we have a new incentive to not only promote equity, but to allow concerned employers to avoid the tax entirely, if they bring their business to the communities that need development and access to jobs the most.

While our *Equitable Employer Tax* challenges large corporations to put more skin in the game, our new tax credit, the SEED credit, allows those same corporations to receive a monthly credit for each Chicagoan that they employ in historically disinvested neighborhoods.

This tax is not about tilting against a straw man of corporations and billionaires. It is about a fair investment, funding the resources that draw those corporations to Chicago in the first place.

And make no mistake—the corporations continue to come. We are the #1 American metropolitan area for corporate relocation. Equitable investment in our city creates jobs, attracts businesses and tourists, and does so while addressing the root causes of disinvestment head-on. It is fiscally responsible. Equitable investment creates the foundation of public safety necessary for us to build.

But we are not focused exclusively on any one corporate tax or financial strategy, and I would ask each member of the media present today to make that clear in their reporting, and not allow discourse about this budget to focus on a tax that makes up 1.5% of our corporate budget.

We are committed to exploring innovative new ideas to raise revenue. Thanks to the leadership of Alderman Burnett, we are introducing a new Packaging Waste Tax of fifteen cents for each single-use, mailer, or package used for deliveries in Chicago, exempting medicine and food take out, to not only raise a projected $9 million, but also to encourage people to shop local and reduce waste.

And we are recommitting to revenue raising strategies that we know work.

This year proved that sustainable forms of progressive revenue are the best path toward a stronger financial future. Every one of our progressive taxes has outperformed projections by millions of dollars.

Because of these results, this year, instead of making reckless speculations, we are focusing our efforts on what we know works. The Fair Share Budget is 76% structural, meaning we

are reducing our reliance on one-time fixes, continually shrinking our deficit. That's fiscally responsible.

By making adjustments to the Personal Property Lease Tax, we will ask big tech companies like Amazon profiting from Chicagoans to contribute more to City services while tailoring its reach to preserve outside investment and growth in Chicago as much as possible. These increases alone are expected to produce an additional $234 million in 2027.

This is how we build the Chicago our children deserve.

Chicago's greatest strength has always been its people. The workers who keep it moving, the families who invest in its future, the small-business owners who bring our commercial corridors to life, and the neighbors who show up for one another when times are hard.

Our diversity, our creativity, and our determination have carried us through difficult chapters before. And they will carry us forward as we continue building a city that lives up to its promise.

Today, we face a choice.

We can invest in our people, strengthen our neighborhoods, and build an economy where working families have a fair chance to share in the prosperity they help create. We can confront inequality and make the investments our communities need to thrive.

Or we can accept the status quo. We can allow the same inequities to deepen, the same communities to be overlooked, and the gains of our economy to flow to those who already have the most. We can keep asking working people to do more with less while expecting our city to thrive without the investments its people need.

That is not a future I am willing to accept for Chicago.

Last year, I spoke about a simple truth: What happens in Old Town affects Austin. What happens in Auburn Gresham affects Rogers Park. What happens downtown affects our neighborhoods, and what happens on the Far Northwest Side can be felt on the Far Southwest Side. We may be divided into sides, wards, and neighborhoods, but we are bound by our responsibility to one another.

That belief continues to guide this year's Chicago Fair Share Budget. At a time when the

federal government is cutting critical funding and targeting our city, we must protect the services and programs Chicagoans depend on.

And we must do that without asking working-class and middle-class families to shoulder even more of the burden. Large corporations can and should contribute more to the city whose people, infrastructure, and neighborhoods make their success possible. This is not about spite. It is about making sure Chicago's prosperity reaches the people who help create it.

Because this fight is about so much more than one tax.

It is about who gets to share in Chicago's prosperity, who gets a fair shot at opportunity, and whether we are willing to challenge the systems that have left too many communities behind.

And if we look to our own history, we know this fight is not new.

Harold Washington understood that the promise of Chicago could never be fulfilled while entire communities were shut out of opportunity and power. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Chicago to confront the deep inequalities that working families faced, including the injustice of being denied fair housing and a fair chance at economic security.

Like so many other great Americans, they challenged systems that concentrated wealth and power in the hands of a few while leaving too many people behind.

Decades later, that fight continues. We are still asking who bears the cost of our challenges, whose interests our government serves, and whether we have the courage to make the difficult choices our future demands.

I will not leave the difficult decisions to fall at the feet of my children, or yours. I hope you will not, either.

Let's do what is necessary to build the safest most affordable city in America. Let us plant the seeds of a fair Chicago.

We do not have to accept the way things are simply because that is the way they have always been. We know what happens when inequality deepens and we abandon our responsibilities to one another. And we should never accept the notion that asking those

with the greatest means to pay their fair share will somehow come at the expense of economic growth.

The Chicago Fair Share Budget is our commitment to choose differently. To protect our people, sustain our investments, and build on the strength of a city that has never been defined by its challenges, but by its determination to overcome them.

So I ask you to join us. Stand with the people who make this city great. Fight for the investments our neighborhoods need. Help us build a Chicago where every family has a fair shot, every community has a future, and the people who make this city work get to share in all that they help create.

Thank you, and God bless you all, and God bless the people of Chicago.