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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

(CHAIRPERSON)

TRANSPORTATION

(VICE-CHAIRPERSON)

BUDGET

COMMITTEES AND RULES

PUBLIC SAFETY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WAY

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS
MONTHLY RULE 45 REPORT : JANUARY 2024

Pursuant to Rule 45 of the City of Chicago Rules of Order, the **Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights** submits the following Monthly report for January 2024.

REFERRED MATTERS

HELD IN COMMITTEE

R2024-0007367	Referred 01/24/2024	Call for U.S. President Biden and Secretary of Homeland Security to process requests for temporary protective status to Ecuadorian citizens migrating to United States.
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REPORTS AND MATERIALS RECEIVED BY COMMITTEE

1. 'Agenda of Matters' document, provided by the Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
2. 'December 2023 Rule 45 Report' document, provided by Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
3. Written public comment, provided by the Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
4. 'The Welcoming City' slidedeck, provided by the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Family & Support Services, and the Office of Emergency Management & Communications.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENT

In order of date received.

1. From Lonette Sims, Dr. Barbara J. Norman, and Dr. Howard Ehrman; People's Response Network :

Dear Chairman Andre Vasquez,

The People's Response Network (PRN), with whom you met in 2020 & 2021, looks forward to working with you and your committee to improve services being offered to newly arrived migrants and refugees.

It is now 6 weeks since 5 year old Afro-Venezuelan Jean Carlos Martinez Rivero tragically died at the 2241 S. Halsted migrant shelter contracted out by the city to Kansas City Based Favorite Healthcare Staffing, who has been overpaid \$millions in city contracts, continues to have filthy, dangerous conditions at the shelters and was fined more than \$3 Million by the U.S. Department of Labor for federal violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act's (FLSA) minimum wage and overtime requirements.

The city's response has been disorganized, ignoring its historic legal and moral oversight of the shelters, services and migrants by allowing the City of Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC), Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS) and private corporations to open and run shelters and all services connected to the migrants without following decades' long policies, regulations, guidelines and protocols that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, Doctors Without Borders and others have developed over decades.

Given that the Illinois General Assembly, under the Compiled Statutes, (20 ILCS 2305/1.1) and (20 ILCS 2310/2310-1) Sec. 2310-1. This Article 2310 of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois may be cited as the Department of Public Health Powers and Duties Law. (Source: P.A. 91-239, eff. 1-1-00.) This Act authorizes the delegation of duties and powers [to] local health departments to enforce for the purpose of local administration and enforcement.

Sec. 2. Powers (a) provides supreme authority in matters of quarantine and isolationand make investigations and sanitary inspections from time to time as deemed necessary for the preservation and improvement of public health, consistent with the law regulating the following: (sanitary practices, accessible drinking water, lavatory/culinary purposes, rest room facilities, hand washing/bathing facilities, handling, preparation, and serving foods safe for consumption, sanitary practices relating to disposal to human waste, etc. in all places where people live, work or assemble.

The Department of Public Health shall investigate the causes of dangerously contagious or infectious diseases, especially when existing in epidemic form, and take means to restrict and suppress the same, and whenever such disease becomes, or threatens to become epidemic, in any locality and the local board of health or local authorities neglect or refuse to enforce efficient measures for its restriction or suppression or to act with sufficient promptness or efficiency, or whenever the local board of health or local authorities neglect or refuse to promptly enforce efficient measures for the restriction or suppression of dangerously contagious or infectious diseases, the Department of Public Health may enforce such measures as it deems necessary to protect the public health, and all necessary expenses so incurred shall be paid by the locality for which services are rendered.

It is essential that the Chicago Fire Department (CFD), Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS), Health, Housing and other Commissioners and their staffs present written documentation to your Immigration and Refugee Rights Committee on who, how and when city officials and staff, not contractors, comprehensively inspected each migrant shelter before each one opened, how and when deficiencies were corrected, and on each follow-up visit after each shelter opened.

It is critical to know which city of Chicago staff is on site in each of the shelters and how often.

It is urgent for your committee to see written documentation and proof that every single employee and volunteer of every single private contractor running each shelter has a current CPR card and that each shelter has several automated external defibrillators (AED) as just one of dozens of examples of what should have been verified through formal checklists BEFORE any shelter opened and in a minimum of weekly inspections by city officials.

The CFD Commissioner must present to your Committee both the audio and written transcripts of the 911 Call and subsequent CFD ambulance run generated during the death of 5 year old Jean Carlos Martinez Rivero to show (1) whether Favorite Healthcare Staffing staff administered first aid and if so what type of first aid (2) Was there an automated external defibrillator (AED) @ the 2241 S. Halsted Shelter and if so was it used (3) Did the child have a pulse upon arrival of CFD? (4) What on site resuscitation was administered @ the 2241 S. Halsted by CFD and/or in the ambulance before it left for the hospital and during the trip to the hospital.

All new arrival migrants must immediately be comprehensively screened medically and for mental health and social service needs they may have in a humane, caring way as soon as they arrive and Before they are placed in any shelter, hotel or temporary housing as has happened to ~ half of the Chicago new arrival migrants since last year and All NYC migrants since May, 2023

We urge you to invite Drs. Sharon Welbel, Cook County Health Infectious Disease Director, who in 2023 created the migrant screening clinic on the second floor of the Belmont-Cragin Health Center @ 5501 W. Fullerton and Dr. Ted Long, New York City Health & Hospitals Senior Vice President for Ambulatory Care and Population Health, who created and oversees the 24/7 comprehensive screening of all migrants on arrival to NYC before being placed in any housing to present to your committee with the goal of opening the Cook County Center 24/7 within 1 month, like NYC for migrants arriving anywhere in the city by bus, plane, train or car as well as trusted advocates who have been inside and outside the shelters.

We look forward to working with you and your committee.

Please contact us at the email and phone # under our logo at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Lonette Sims, PRN Chair

Dr. Barbara J. Norman, PRN Co-Founder Former CDPH Deputy Commissioner

Dr. Howard Ehrman, PRN Co-Founder Former CDPH Assistant Commissioner

2. From Miriam Bhimani :

Good morning:

We acknowledge those of you who signed the letter calling on Mayor Johnson to rescind his eviction policy. We expect those who signed the letter to work together toward better housing policy in the City.

For those who have not yet publicly called on the Mayor to rescind the eviction policy -

If you are desirous of the Governor and the President to provide more aid, it does not prevent you from also demanding better policy at the municipal level. We do not need to diffuse demands away from the Mayor and we do not need to practice an austerity mindset; we have many options to design good local policy for all of us and we should do that.

You don't need permission from volunteers to take a principled stand. If you believe organizers and those on the ground must make perfect demands and you did not agree with all of the demands on the initial letter, you are invited to release your own public statement.

If you find yourself relying on the term Mutual Aid, please consider that you might mean volunteers, organizers or something else. Mutual Aid does not give cover to the State or act as an extension of the State. It does not make any sense when

our Mayor says he's relying on Mutual Aid. Read more about what Mutual Aid is here.

A couple of Alders have told folks that Mayor Johnson doesn't plan on enacting the eviction policy. Favorite Staffing has already evicted people so the claim that the evictions will not be enforced is not believable.

Quiet deference to the Executive Branch does not serve Chicago. To acculturate people to the absurd is cruel. When our government says it will enact violence, we should take it seriously.

When people leave the shelter during the day, staffers are taking peoples' belongings and holding them in a locked office. Then, staffers send emails like this one:

Favor de ir a la oficina de tu asesora de casos lo más pronto posible. Tenemos tu carta de desalojo para el día primero de febrero de 2024.

We should not evict people.

Additionally, Chicago should not practice family separation.

Based on grievance documentation and other city records, it is clear that city vendors and CPD are willing to call DCFS upon parents. There was an early challenge to the childcare policy in shelters. The Mayor's office used the threat of family separation through DCFS and forced criminalization through law enforcement.

Families are then forced into horrific shelter conditions. We know the shelter conditions are bad from our work and from public reporting; we also know the Mayor understands the shelter conditions are bad. What changes has the Mayor's Office made? We still hear reports of sickness, lack of bathrooms and not enough food. Please watch this recently produced video about the Halsted shelter.

In Chicago, we can decide that people are an absolute positive and work for stability instead of precarity and dysregulation.

*For a published version of this letter, please see:
<https://bit.ly/OpenLetterEvictions>*

Miriam

3. From Betsy Johnston :

To the Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights,

I am a resident of Chicago and I have grave concerns about the treatment of our newest neighbors. As a volunteer with Community Care Collective - 33rd Ward (CCC33), I was privileged to welcome many of the new arrivals from the Texas border, when they arrived at the 17th District Police Station. In continued contact with them through CCC33, as well as through my children's school (Carl Von Linne Elementary) I have been told the following:

- Shelter's feel like prisons.*
- Shelter staff mistreat residents.*
- Residents of shelters are either unaware of who their case manager is, or when they ask their case manager for information, the information isn't given to them (for example: how to apply for extensions on their eviction notice).*
- Shelter residents do not have access to over the counter medications like fever-reducers for their children.*
- Shelter residents do not have access to warm clothing and blankets.*
- Food in shelters is too spicy for their children to eat, is moldy, and is insufficient.*

This list could go on. And what is so frustrating, as a resident of Chicago who really wants to welcome my new neighbors here, is that myself and my fellow volunteers continue to be refused access to shelters, to help improve upon the conditions, the way we were able to do when folks were living at the police stations. As terrible as police stations were for individuals to be living in, they at least were not isolated from community, and people who care about them were able to help meet their needs.

*Thank you for time,
Betsy Johnston*

4. From Maureen Graves :

I am a lawyer and have been involved with numerous aspects of support for recent migrants.

I have been in touch with residents of at least 5 shelters. I have heard pervasive fears of retaliation. That fear is based on seeing people "written up," with unpredictable consequences, arbitrarily. It is based on people being moved out of private rooms into large cot spaces for expressing seemingly legitimate concerns. It is based on seeing people transferred to other shelters, wreaking educational and medical havoc for families, for talking with outsiders including without limitation reporters and other supposed infractions. Because of this pervasive fear, I am presenting concerns generally rather than linking them to particular shelters.

Nutrition:

Complaints about food, which persist with the new provider, include that it is too spicy and occasionally not edible.

Children refuse to eat much of the food. Parents and volunteers are spending money to augment shelter diets, undermining the city's hope that migrants and providers of natural supports will be able to save money and fund housing in the near future. Families are very short of money, and are spending it on something that is supposedly being provided for free.

There is reportedly a tremendous amount of food waste. That is measurable. The city should demand measurement.

Families with infants:

Cribs and bassinets are not being provided, perhaps at all, and definitely not to the extent necessary. Some families are either relying on volunteers to arrange safe sleeping arrangements and some are being denied safe sleeping accommodations for infants and toddlers. It appears that the shelter contractor does not think that ensuring that babies can sleep safely is its responsibility. It provides beds -- for babies, beds need to meet current safety standards.

Available, recommended in-home visits from medical providers are being barred from living spaces, reducing chances that required reporters of child abuse and neglect will take steps to correct unhealthy and unsafe conditions.

Baby formula is reportedly very tightly rationed.

Mothers who are breastfeeding are denied necessary nutrition.

Even nursing mothers and pregnant women are regularly barred from having food in rooms, causing stress and nutritional problems. Citizen children's lifelong prospects are being undermined.

Parents report being given one or two diapers at a time and needing to interact with rude staff to get more. Volunteers should not have to buy diapers.

Damaging legal advice from nonlawyers:

In at least one shelter, social workers have told residents that "asylum" is "political asylum," and that unless they were activists at risk of persecution from their governments, they do not qualify. This is flatly wrong. People can qualify for asylum, withholding of deportation, and protection under the international torture convention if

they face a risk of persecution for a variety of reasons, from governments or from forces that governments are unwilling or unable to control.

"Rules" and arbitrary controls:

From what I hear and see, staff are extremely controlling, seeming to think that they control the streets near shelters.

While one shelter that I have dealt with has allowed helping professionals to come in and help, at least one other refuses to allow medical and legal support.

Staff are at a minimum extremely evasive and appear to lie. My husband and I visited one night to complain about a post telling residents they had to "botar" (throw away) any coats in excess of 2 per person. Having spent thousands of dollars and many hours on coats, and knowing how many people need them, this irritated us. We went to complain. Staff on duty claimed that botar didn't mean throw away. We pointed out that the announcement said to botar and prove one was doing so, not to donate for reuse. Staff evaded question as to whether there was an announcement re donating, but claimed there was a well-known process, which social workers told residents about, to reuse items residents did not need by donating them internally. A little later, another volunteer was told that it would be impossible to have a donation site for such items. Staff claimed that the city had provided new coats in all sizes, and all people had to do was ask. Meanwhile, people keep coming to my basement seeking coats and when I tell them the shelter has new ones in all sizes, some say they tried. Some complain about light coats and coat denials.

It appears that staff vary in levels of care for residents, and that the philosophy from the top in at least one shelter is harsh -- previous immigrants didn't get help, so neither should this group.

It is not clear what qualifications "social workers" have or what they do other than enforce rules.

Assessing what is happening in a zero-transparency environment:

Obviously, residents could have reasons to accentuate the negative, exaggerate or lie, but in thinking about whether to believe people who are complaining, it has struck me that most people are not complaining about everything. For instance, from what I have heard, laundry is not that bad, though items do sometimes get lost. There has been some complaining about room temperatures, but not much that I have heard. People seem to be looking for blankets, not claiming that Lake Shore had inadequate heating. When resident reports are detailed and change over time, and staff insist there is nothing to see here and volunteers should focus on landing zones, I think there is probably a lot to see and hope that you will look into it urgently.

Constant threats of eviction from particular shelters and shelter system: Many residents could “defend themselves” in English by now had they been given conditions in which to learn, rather than living in constant fear. This has to stop.

5. From Brenda Delgado :

Stop Evictions from Shelter

Good morning. My name is Brenda Delgado, I serve on the board of IL Raise Your Hand and am one of thousands of mutual aid volunteers that have welcomed and assisted New Arrivals since last year. I am temporarily relieved that Mayor Johnson will delay evicting 1900 of our New Neighbors on Feb. 1 and an additional 961 individuals on Feb. 2, many of these included children attending Chicago Public Schools. But we can do better than a last minute temporary extension. We are Chicago, these are our children’s classmates, and these are our New Neighbors. Raise Your Hand is calling on Mayor Johnson to stop evicting people from shelters in the middle of this Chicago winter and protect these children from being homeless in our sanctuary city.

Because these children are living in shelters, they are eligible for specific protections as Students in Transitional Living Situations (STLS). CPS is legally required to protect the educational rights of homeless students, and provide transportation. Many children walk from their shelter to their local public school. If evicted from shelters in a few weeks, these children will likely have insurmountable barriers to continue attending their current school. CPS will still be legally required to provide transportation to thousands of these homeless children, further straining transportation schedules that don’t even meet the current need of every eligible student.

Every CPS school provides free breakfast and lunch. If evicted, these children likely will go hungry if they can’t reach their school anymore. There will be thousands of hungry children roaming the streets, and we are calling on Mayor Johnson to avoid this inhumane chaos. Reality is the promised shelter resources have still not reached all eligible New Arrivals, there is a backlog in case management and housing assistance that needs to be resolved first.

Schools across the city have invested significant resources in welcoming our new neighbors. Disrupting these homeless children’s education in the middle of the academic year will further burden our underfunded schools. Let’s not forget IL’s Evidence-Based-Formula for funding public schools still doesn’t provide even 75% of adequate funding, and this increase in English Language Learners widens the gap even further. Since CPS is still under Mayor Johnson’s control and we still don’t have an elected Board of Education, we implore Mayor Johnson to coordinate city resources and meet the legally required minimum of all public school students. Raise Your Hand is also

calling for additional state and federal funding to be made available to meet the required minimum funding levels to meet the needs of these homeless students.

Again, we implore Mayor Johnson to halt evictions, even past March, and not leave our New Neighbors out in the cold.

6. From Kaelyn Robinson :

To Whom It May Concern:

Glad to be with you. My name is Kaelyn Robinson in the Avondale Community Area. I am a member of the Community Care Collective of the 33rd Ward.

The first thing I want to discuss is a neoliberal false choice. We are still dealing with the effects of Rahm's closure of schools and clinics a decade later. It was expensive and short-sighted and we can't use the same failed "cost-cutting" strategy with our new arrivals, or allow it to be rebranded as "responsible stewardship of resources." Evictions are destabilizing, and they will prevent people from being able to build toward resettlement. 60 days is an arbitrary timeline, disconnected from what people actually need, even if they are lucky enough to qualify for work permits or rental assistance. We need to think beyond extending shelter to building permanent housing because this is a housing crisis. When policy groups meet, prioritize permanent solutions.

The second thing I want to bring to the fore is bureaucracy that makes things someone else's problem. The shelter system, which is designed to fail our newest neighbors, moves asylees from place to place and purview to purview. The effect is that sustainable solutions are disincentivized. There needs to be continuity of care. This means not only no evictions, period, but a durable case management system. Our neighbors last week told us they don't know who their case manager is, and in some cases are told by shelter staff there aren't any.

The third thing I want to bring up is contractors who are unaccountable. The city had originally committed to fire Favorite staffing, but at a press conference yesterday the Mayor refused to speak to finding a replacement. The entire procurement process is a race to the cheapest, and not based on the value of services. We may be hearing from Favorite Healthcare Staffing today. We have yet to hear from resettlement and work permitting contractors. These are the humane ways folks can move out of shelter. The Committee should be asking for testimony from Catholic Charities, and others.

Lastly, I want to talk about shelters as carceral sites. The only people who can speak with authority on the conditions in shelter are the residents. We have heard from officials from each agency scheduled to testify today who are wholly ignorant of the lived experience of our new neighbors. These shelters are completely opaque, not allowing volunteers in. It keeps folks isolated from community and resources. Our coalition has

had to find ways to work around this lack of access, but we are in communication with folks in shelter daily, and we are continually told that shelter staff treat them as sub-human, and penalize them for speaking up, or asking for services. Grievance mechanisms are failing due to power imbalance and a lack of trauma informed care. The immediate need here is for much more direct oversight of these bodies. This moment calls on us.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

SUBJECT MATTER HEARING / COMMITTEE MEETING - January 30, 2024

On January 30, 2024 at 9a, the Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights held a Subject Matter Hearing and Committee Meeting in the Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, City Hall.

ROLL CALL

The following committee members were present : Chair Vasquez (40), Vice Chair Taylor (20), Alderperson Gutierrez (14), Alderperson Rodriguez (22), Alderperson Fuentes (26), Alderperson Taliaferro (29), Alderperson Cruz (30), Alderperson Cardona (31), Alderperson Knudsen (43), Alderperson Manaa-Hoppenworth (48), Alderperson Hadden (49). A quorum was established.

Due to extenuating circumstances, Alderperson Dowell (3), Alderperson Rodriguez Sanchez (33), and Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa (35), requested to attend the Committee Meeting virtually in accordance with Rule 59 of the City Council's Rules of Order. Alderperson Gutierrez moved to allow Alderperson Dowell, Alderperson Rodriguez Sanchez, and Alderperson Ramirez-Rosa to attend virtually; with no objections, the motion passed.

The following non-members were present : Alderperson Lee (11), Alderperson Sigcho Lopez (25), Alderperson Mitts (37). Alderperson Mitts attended virtually.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following public speakers were each given three minutes to provide their testimony : Carlos, Nora Pamplora, Ana Mata, Kelley Baumann, Rosemary Vega, Christopher Amatore, Jessica Jackson, Gabriel Cortez, LaRanne Lawrence, George Blakemore.

THE COMMITTEE ADDRESSED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

RULE 45 REPORT

Approval of the December 2023 Rule 45 Report of the Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

- Chair Vasquez introduced the December 2023 Rule 45 Report, then asked for a motion to approve the report. Alderperson Fuentes so moved; with no objections, the Rule 45 Report was approved.

SUBJECT MATTER HEARING

The Subject Matter Hearing will discuss landing zone conditions, shelter conditions, shelter grievance procedure, and oversight of contracted agencies.

- Chair Vasquez introduced the Subject Matter Hearing.
- Beatriz Ponce de León, Deputy Mayor for Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights, Office of the Mayor, introduced 'The Welcoming City' slide deck and gave a broad overview of the current and evolving operations regarding new arrivals.
- Brandie Knazze, Commissioner, Department of Family & Support Services; Maura McCauley, Managing Deputy Commissioner, Department of Family & Support Services; and Matt Doughtie, Manager of Emergency Management Services, Office of Emergency Management & Communications presented 'The Welcoming City' slide deck.
- The following Alderpersons made comments or asked questions : Chair Vasquez, Alderperson Rodriguez, Alderperson Hadden, Alderperson Lee, Alderperson Cruz, Alderperson Sigcho Lopez.
- Beatriz Ponce de León, Deputy Mayor for Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights, answered questions regarding the following : current and future pace of arrivals; shelter case management and shelter exits; limits of the Asylum Seeker Emergency Rental Assistance Program funding; the 60 day shelter policy; Chicago requests for federal assistance; health care in shelters; and more.
- Commissioner Knazze answered questions regarding the following : vendor oversight; unification of new arrival and homeless systems; shelter evictions affecting students; DFSS staff expansion; shelter case management and shelter exits; the 60 day shelter policy; grievance reports for Alderpersons; Chicago's homeless shelter capacity; Chicago's Chief Homeless Officer position; Halsted Shelter conditions; availability of medications at shelters; work authorization eligibility; shelter staff feedback and training; and more.
- Daniel Castañeda, Director for New Arrivals, Department of Family & Support Services, answered questions regarding the following : Favorite Healthcare Staffing oversight and accountability; United African Organization's new partnership with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights; LGBTQIIA+ operations; available isolation rooms; healthcare for new and expectant mothers; and more.
- Matt Doughtie, Manager of Emergency Management Services, answered questions regarding the following : current pace of arrivals; expansion of Catholic Charities case management; and more.
- William Lohr, Project Manager for New Arrivals, Department of Family & Support Services, answered questions regarding : eligibility for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and employment authorization; operations at TPS and work authorization clinics; TPS application fee waivers for shelter residents; and more.
- Rey Wences Nájera, First Deputy for Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights, Office of the Mayor, answered questions regarding : volunteer programs to support new arrivals; information in Aldermanic Briefings; assistance from the Federal government; and more.

- Maura McCauley, Managing Deputy Commissioner, Department of Family & Support Services, answered questions regarding : infection control; Favorite Healthcare Staffing; and more.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Vasquez asked for a motion to adjourn. Multiple Alderpersons, including Alderperson Fuentes, so moved. Hearing no objections, Chair Vasquez adjourned the meeting.