

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Cook County Health has more than 180-years of history of providing health care to everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, or ability to pay; and

WHEREAS, in addition to providing direct clinical care, Cook County Health also works to identify and address social needs, including but not limited to food insecurity, housing instability, and justice involvement; and

WHEREAS, Cook County Health has a long history of working to address structural and systemic racism and takes an inclusive approach in our work; and

WHEREAS, the majority of CCH's patients are under-served minority groups and those with health insurance rely on public insurance as their primary payor; and

WHEREAS, CCH continues to provide the majority of uncompensated care in Cook County, including to individuals ineligible for public health insurance coverage options; and

WHEREAS, in CCH's most recent strategic plan, IMPACT 2023, Focus Area 5, "Impact Social Determinants of Health and Advocate for Patients" contemplates initiatives that CCH will undertake to address continued inequities that lead to poor health outcomes for vulnerable communities; and

WHEREAS, around the world, life expectancy rates are regarded as the key measure to judge a society's overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, according to research published by the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in 2020, medical care accounts for only 20% of the contributors to health outcomes; the other 80% are social determinants of health, such as educational opportunity, living wage employment, transportation access, and quality housing; and

WHEREAS, the West Side of Chicago is composed of 10 beautifully diverse neighborhoods that vary substantially in history and demographics; and

WHEREAS, life expectancy rates are lowest in West Side neighborhoods—East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Austin, and North Lawndale, which all have life expectancies well below the average in Chicago and the United States; and

WHEREAS, data from the University of Chicago Crime Lab show the West Side has fewer options for health care, banking and groceries than any other area in the city; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of the region's six largest health care institutions joined forces and formed West Side United in 2018 to build community health and economic wellness on Chicago's West Side; and

WHEREAS, West Side United's founding partners included: Rush University Medical Center, Ascension, Cook County Health, Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Sinai Chicago, and University of Illinois Health, who joined forces to coordinate resources to improve outcomes; and

WHEREAS, West Side United's ambitious aim is to eliminate the life expectancy gap between the Loop and the West Side by addressing the unique needs of these 10 neighborhoods and combatting the legacy of racism and disinvestment; and

WHEREAS, the community's voice was at the center of every aspect of West Side United's decision-making. Prior to launching any initiatives, West Side United held a series of 21 community engagement sessions across all 10 neighborhoods on the West Side that included over 300 residents and other stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, West Side United’s strategic plan prioritizes initiatives that aim to address the factors research proves to be the most significant drivers of lower life expectancy, scale our partners’ most promising solutions, and help develop programs that fill gaps in our communities; and

WHEREAS, West Side United’s approach bringing community-based organizations together to build community health and economic wellness includes: Greater Chicago Food Depository, Iglesia Evangelica Emmanuel, Illinois Public Health Institute, La Casa Norte, ACCESS Community Health Network, American Heart Association, American Medical Association, Community Health, Enlace, Esperanza Marshall Square Resource Network, New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church, The Hatchery, and Windy City Harvest, among nearly 130 other organizations; and

WHEREAS, in initial planning, WSU, residents and other stakeholders identified four strategic pillars: Health and Healthcare, Neighborhood and Physical Environment, Economic Vitality, and Education; and

WHEREAS, West Side United’s economic vitality strategy is designed to create pathways to greater economic security and increase median household income by linking West Side residents to career training opportunities, supporting local hiring targets for health systems, coordinating social impact investing and overseeing a small business accelerator program; and

WHEREAS, since 2018, WSU has contributed over \$9 million in small business grants across the 10 neighborhoods on the West Side to hire and train more staff, invest in equipment and facilities, and support innovative marketing strategies to ensure they thrive; and

WHEREAS, WSU established an Employee Professional Pathway (EPP) program in 2018 with a significant investment from the JP Morgan Chase Advancing Cities Initiative consisting of four career pathways for West Side residents to pursue in-demand positions as medical assistants, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), health information technology personnel and phlebotomists. Participants complete courses, gain experience and skills with hands-on training, and earn credentials to advance professionally; and

WHEREAS, WSU hospital partners have an overall collective spend of more than \$4 billion annually, they have an opportunity to engage with West Side businesses and communities where they collectively work to provide contract opportunities which invest in businesses with West Side zip codes; and

WHEREAS, WSU is a national model uniquely positioned to support hospital partners in making connections to available West Side vendors, implement best practice approaches to prioritize local spending, and set and track individual and collective goals; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the independent governing Board of Directors of Cook County Health affirms our continued commitment to eliminating structural and systemic racism by promoting health equity and advocating for equity in healthcare, education, employment, public safety; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Cook County Health shall execute a Memorandum of Understanding to create a new not-for-profit entity known as West Side United NFP and shall participate (along with the other founding members) as an initial member of that entity, and that the Chief Executive Officer of Cook County Health shall be authorized to execute such documents as necessary to accomplish this goal; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as a member of West Side United NFP, Cook County Health will continue to seek partnerships and new and innovative strategies to comprehensively address the social determinants of health based on best practice research to improve our city and county’s health and economy.

Approved by the CCH Board of Directors on January 18, 2024.