July 26th, 2023

Honorable Mayor Brandon Johnson
121 North LaSalle Street, Room 500
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Mayor Johnson,

Today I am writing regarding the recent string of robberies in the 43rd Ward, and accordingly, to formally request additional officers be assigned to the 18th District to appropriately staff all beats in the District, specifically those in the 43rd Ward which are understaffed.

As public safety remains the top priority for all elected officials in Chicago, a strong partnership between your administration, my 43rd Ward office, and our local community is vital. As a city leader, I am heartened that during your first months in office, you have voiced a prioritization of protecting our whole City and introducing violence prevention measures. I share this priority and remain excited to engage with you and your team to achieve it.

Since June 1st, 2023, the 43rd Ward has seen 44 robbery victimizations and a mass shooting that left 5 injured and our community terrified. These 44 robbery victimizations are higher than each other Ward that touches ours, including almost double the number of robberies that occurred in Lakeview during this period.¹

This influx in summer crime in the 43rd Ward is not unique to this year. Since 2022, the 43rd Ward has seen a 31% increase in robberies.² Furthermore, from 2021 - 2023, there has been a 63% increase in robberies in the broader 18th District.³ While these robberies continue to climb, the 18th District has seen an enormous reduction in officers. Just two years ago, there were 398 officers assigned to the 18th District. Now, in June of 2023, a further reduction has left only 286 officers assigned to the 18th District. Now, in June of 2023, a further reduction has left only 286 officers assigned to the 18th District, representing a net loss of 104 officers in the 18th District in just 2 years⁴ and from January 2019 to November 2022, the 18th District suffered the largest loss of sworn members of any district in Chicago.⁵

⁴ https://informationportal.igchicago.org/dashboards/public-safety/active-sworn-officers/
The resultant loss of regular, reliable, and predictable beat patrolling and timely response to 911 calls combined with a stark rise in violent crime is of utmost concern to my constituents. There is not one easy “quick fix” when it comes to these crimes of opportunity, and I am fully aware that just investing in more officers will not solve all our problems. However, as you consider a nominee for the Superintendent role, I strongly encourage you to nominate an individual committed to an enlightened and creative community policing strategy and an equitable deployment of officers in every District throughout all of Chicago. For example, a community policing strategy that will decentralize the staffing of officers from downtown and into our districts.⁶

This general strategy is our only possible path towards beat integrity and improved 911 response time. It should be combined with a commitment to invest in innovative technology and enhanced civilianization (to fill manpower gaps), violence prevention strategies, as well as education, jobs, and other resources/opportunities for youth in communities that have been disenfranchised by the pandemic and disinvested in for decades.

Together, we can put Chicago on a path toward safety and I am fully committed to partnering with you to do so. As an immediate measure while we work on longer-term public safety strategies, I ask that we take concrete short-term steps to ensure districts like the 18th are fully staffed and allocated adequate resources.

I look forward to partnering with you in this work and remain ready to meet to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Timmy Knudsen
Alderman, 43rd Ward