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NEWS RELEASE
JOINT CITY, COUNTY HEARING FOCUSES ON CRISIS OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT
*Seeking Stronger Policy Solutions, Committees Hear First-hand Accounts of Youths
Looking for Work & Agencies' Struggles to Maintain Programs
Nothing Builds A Future Like A Job*

CHICAGO -- A joint hearing of the Chicago City Council Workforce & Audit Committee, chaired by **Alderman Patrick O'Connor**, 40th Ward, and the Cook County Workforce, Housing and Community Development Committee, chaired by Cook County **Commissioner Bridget Gainer**, D-10, will dig into the problems faced by young people looking for jobs in Chicago and Cook County.

"The young people of Chicago are the city's greatest asset, investing in them and giving them the opportunity to contribute and earn a paycheck is vital to the future of our neighborhoods," **O'Connor** said.

The youth employment crisis, exacerbated by the Great Recession, can lead jobless youth to drop out of school and sometimes join gangs as their last resort.

"Nothing builds a future like a job," **Gainer** said, regarding the May 16 hearing. "Young people gain experience at their first jobs and the relationships they build create a foundation for lifelong success. Whether it's part-time or full-time, internship or apprenticeship, giving young people opportunities to work is a proven indicator of healthy communities and cities."

Youth that have faced those barriers are given a voice at the May 16 joint hearing. A number of them, along with two employers who hire young people from low-income neighborhoods, will testify about the difficulty of finding and getting to jobs, what it's like to be jobless in Chicago and Cook County, and what works for young people and employers.

"The findings from a soon-to-be released report are that education makes a difference in earning potential and probability of being unemployed," said **Teresa Córdova, Director of Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois at Chicago**. "We found that even eight years after the 2008 recession, there is still a crisis of joblessness among Black and Latino teens and young adults. Jobless youth tend to live in economically abandoned areas with concentrated joblessness and limited access to major job centers."



“The schools we represent have made great progress in getting young people off the streets and into schools, bringing them through to graduation and helping many of them find a way to get started on a college education,” says **Alternative Schools Network Executive Director Jack Wuest**. “But if we are not, as a society, investing in jobs and employment programs for these youths that will help them take the steps to become successful adults, we are likely to see more problems of violence in our neighborhoods.”

Participating agencies will give testimony on their work in youth employment programs and the joint committee co-chairs will lead a discussion on the impact of youth unemployment, the advantages of hiring youth for employment, and how to achieve job preparedness through youth employment programs.

The commissioners and aldermen are scheduled to hear testimony from Córdoba, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership CEO Karin Norington-Reaves, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services Deputy Commissioner Mary Ellen Messner, Thrive Chicago President and Chief Impact Officer Sandra Abrevaya, Emerson Collective Senior Advisor Candice Jones, Rebecca Janowitz from the Cook County Justice Advisory Council and Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation Executive Director Ann Kisting.

The Chicago Urban League, Westside Health Authority, Chicago Area Project, Black United Fund of Illinois, the National Youth Advocate Program, Youth Connection Charter School, Metropolitan Family Services and the Alternative Schools Network will also participate.

For previous reports by the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute go to greatcities.uic.edu.

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