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**PRESIDENT PRECKWINKLE AND MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCE CITY-COUNTY
MERGER IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

Demand-driven workforce development program will train job-seekers with essential skills that match real-time business needs.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced a new collaboration between the City of Chicago and Cook County, in which the two governments will work together to merge, reform and revitalize workforce development and job creation efforts throughout Chicagoland.

"This new approach to workforce development will allow our companies to find and train employees to fit the jobs of the 21st century," said President Preckwinkle. "Neither geographic boundaries nor prior systemic inefficiencies will be an obstacle, as we create an efficient system that will allow us to maximize the value of our workforce."

Currently, Chicago and Cook County spend \$300 million annually on job training, which is spread among more than 100 agencies and organizations. This merger will create a centralized, transparent and efficient partner for businesses in the area, focused on training Chicagoland residents for job skills needed by employers and placement into those jobs. Further, by expanding the use of technology, on-the-job training stipends, and focused, demand-driven training programs, employers will be able to hire Chicagoland workers to fit specific, real-time needs and increase competitiveness in the global marketplace.

The merger will also instill a regional vision for workforce development, so that job-seekers and others will not be limited by geography when they seek workforce assistance. The new system will operate seamlessly between Chicago and Cook County, maximizing the available positions for job-seekers and offering companies a much larger applicant pool.

“This partnership is about putting people into good jobs to meet today’s business demand,” said Mayor Emanuel. “This is about closing the gap between people who can’t find jobs and employers who have available positions but can’t find skilled workers. Having a world-class workforce development system in Chicagoland is essential for our region’s economic future.”

The merger will create a Chicagoland Workforce Board, with a single CEO who will combine the various resources and agencies in a streamlined operation. Karin Norington-Reaves will be the new CEO of the Chicagoland Workforce Board.

The new board will begin the creation of a demand-driven job training system and will focus on working directly with employers and job-seekers to ensure that the system is streamlined, focused on specific opportunities, and easy to use for businesses and job-seekers alike. The Board will additionally develop metrics to evaluate current programs, and will link workforce development into an overall economic development strategy for the region.

“There are great challenges and opportunities for us in the space of workforce development,” said Norington-Reaves. “I look forward to working with Mayor Emanuel and President Preckwinkle to create cutting-edge programs that help businesses find great employees and help our residents find stable, high-paying jobs.”

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