



CITY OF CHICAGO



BOARD OF ETHICS

Good afternoon, Madame Chair Smith and Honorable members of the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight.

I thank you for the opportunity to explain this important new government ethics package.

It is based largely on the experience of the Board of Ethics and the Committee on Ethics and Government Oversight, and it incorporates significant content from the Administration, City Council members, and the Better Government Association. I expressly thank you all for your insights and contributions.

Among other things, this legislation would close gaps in the conflicts of interest laws governing the conduct of all City employees and officials as to their relatives. That is really at its heart. It comes from our Board's years of consultation with employees and officials at all levels and all departments—and on the invaluable work of our colleagues at the Office of Inspector General.

And, it would institute new standards that apply specifically to elected officials and increase transparency in a number of important ways, which I will explain.

Many of these new laws would place Chicago solidly in the vanguard of government ethics regulation.

I have been honored to work for the Board since 1993, with superbly dedicated Board members and staff, and with a wise mentor, Dorothy Eng, who some of you will remember. In this time, I have been fortunate to participate in writing and administering dozens of ethics law amendments.

Getting to good, tight ethics laws is, and has ever been, a tense, emotional process. As Chair Smith has said, it's a marathon, not a sprint. Further, no single ethics package is going to "finally bring corruption to its knees." This one is no exception. But it does represent a big step in the right direction.

And, I stress, it was negotiated. Our system of government is built on deliberation and compromise. As I learned early in my legal career, a good compact is one where everyone walks away equally *dissatisfied*. But — and this is critical — this a package we can be proud of, and there is much in it that should *satisfy* everyone.

I appreciate everyone's patience and good faith—we all act with the understanding that passing powerful, clear ethics laws benefits us all, even if there is discomfort over certain details.

Finally, please rest assured that the Board and its staff are seasoned, dedicated, fair-minded professionals: we will continue to interpret, administer, and enforce these laws with the utmost respect for their letter and spirit, and for those subject to and affected by them. As always, we are available 24/7/365 to provide confidential guidance to all City Council members, staff, and City personnel. Please just contact us.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven I. Berlin, Executive Director