

Madam Chair, Alderpersons, and members of the public:

On behalf of the 5,000 brave firefighters and paramedics of the Chicago Fire Department, I am pleased to be here this morning.

I have been the Fire Commissioner for a little over one year now. In that time, the Department has made significant progress toward the priorities outlined since my confirmation hearing.

For instance, we now have an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the first time in CFD's history. Also, for the first time in CFD's history, we have partnered with a black female-owned firm to actively recruit residents of Chicago from underserved and underrepresented communities on the south and west sides of Chicago. And, I am extremely happy to say, working in partnership with DHR and PSA, the Chicago Fire Department will offer its first firefighter/EMT exam in nearly a decade.

But as the Commissioner, I must also be concerned about the state of the Chicago Fire Department and its employees. Therefore, I have created several initiatives to improve the Department's internal and external operations. For instance, my leadership team continues to be diversified and mirror the communities we serve while maintaining the dedicated and qualified team that this Department is known to have.

Moreover, under my leadership, we have conducted racial equity and bias training for my entire command staff for the first time in CFD's history. We have trained over 126 of our sworn and civilian employees; and will continue this initiative until all of our employees have received racial equity and bias training. These efforts are directly related to my "Honor Our House" initiative, which was created to ensure inclusivity and strive to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and retaliation within the Fire Department.

Additionally, to further improve the Department's internal and external operations, I have taken a data-centered approach to EMS and Fire services. Through a collaboration with CFD's internal data analytics resources, AIS bureau of IT, and OBMs data team; this data-centric approach provides insights to plan for and mitigate medical emergencies and disasters.

I am also happy to report the continued good work of our Public Education Division. The Chicago Fire Department's PubEd Division has focused its community outreach efforts on targeting aldermanic wards with the highest fire fatalities. We have increased public education interactions in these areas with safety programs such as "Safe Chicago" and the "Senior Risk Assessment Program", as well as smoke and carbon monoxide detector giveaways. That being stated, as of August 31st, the YTD number of fire-related fatalities saw a 50% decrease in comparison to the previous year. Accordingly, we have distributed approximately 5,090 smoke alarms and over 562 CO detectors free of charge to residents who might not otherwise be able to afford them.

Our CFD Cares Pop-Up events have reached thousands of residents across the city, providing critical lifesaving information and support to all citizens of Chicago. Every year, CFD strives to reach as many people as possible to provide fire prevention, escape education, stop the bleed, and hands-only CPR techniques. This year we have conducted over 1,496 fire safety programs, reaching more than 30,000 residents across all 50 wards.

As Covid restrictions continue to ease, we anticipate increasing our outreach efforts. Not only will we increase our physical outreach efforts, but we will also augment our efforts by continuing online and virtual engagements. For instance, we will leverage our groundbreaking virtual reality program, "Fire Escape," an interactive residential fire safety training program.

Public safety is the number one concern at CFD, and it drives all that we do as first responders. I am always looking for new and innovative ways to address the well-being of our city's residents.

For example, last year, I announced that we had joined the Mayor's "CARE" pilot program to provide mobile integrated assistance for mental health crisis responses. Also, CFD's Mobile Integrated Health Unit (MIHU) was incorporated into the 2022 budget to address the shared mission of closing healthcare and equity gaps within communities by addressing frequent 911 and emergency room utilization. The Chicago Fire Department implemented a national model of training paramedics to visit community members in their homes or mobile environments, before a healthcare crisis occur, allow for those communities to experience better healthcare outcomes. Although we are still in the pilot phase, I am proud to announce that we have processed approximately 500 referrals and have realized a 95% reduction in participant 911 usage.

We are also working with the Mayor's office and other city departments to address gender-based violence and human trafficking. For instance, CFD's paramedics, utilizing our learning management system, have been trained on identifying gender-based violence and suspected human trafficking issues.

CFD has also distributed tablets and cell phones, programed with information and resources, to communicate with non-English speaking and non-verbal patients. This technology will improve our ability to communicate with those in need when our first responders face language barriers. These tablets cover English, Spanish, Polish, Arabic, and Mandarin.

CFD is also working with the Office of Racial Equity and Justice on our racial equity goals and forming a cohort to create a Racial Equity Action Plan.

Under the leadership of Mayor Lightfoot, CFD remains equipped and ready to respond to a wide range of needs in our city. The Covid pandemic exemplified CFD's preparedness for emergency medical services. The lessons learned from working with the Department of Public Health, responding to Covid-related emergencies across the city, and developing a CFD Covid tracking tool, have positioned us to confront future medical emergencies and disasters.

We look forward to building upon these successes and continuing to work toward our diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. The proposed budget for 2023 will help further the goals I have put together over the past year and will provide me with the necessary resources to implement those plans.

Thank you. I am happy to take any questions you may have.