

CITY OF CHICAGO – Chicago Animal Care and Control

2025 Budget Hearing – December 3, 2024

Susan Cappello, Deputy Director

Chairman Ervin, Vice Chair Lee and members of the City Council, thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I am here to speak on behalf of Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC), a department dedicated to the welfare of our city's animals and the well-being of our community.

Over the past year, CACC has achieved remarkable milestones, including a **34% increase in adoptions** despite a nationwide surge in shelter intakes. In October, we celebrated a significant milestone: we successfully transferred our **6,000th animal into rescue**. A huge thank you to all our amazing partners who help us give these animals a second chance at life.

Our ongoing efforts to control costs have led us to form new partnerships, including the impactful **PAWS Chicago 360@CACC program**, which has been instrumental in improving outcomes for the animals in our care. This initiative provided comprehensive support, from pet owner assistance to enhanced adoption services, all at no cost to taxpayers.

As we celebrated these successes, we also faced significant challenges that required critical conversations about our operations. Our city witnessed a profound rise in the number of animals entering our shelters. Many pet owners struggled to provide for their animals due to financial constraints, while others faced the heartbreak of surrendering their pets due to housing issues. The increased awareness about animal welfare led more individuals to seek help, which, while positive, added to our intake numbers.

Moreover, the rising costs of essential services—such as medical treatments and supplies—compounded our challenges. To navigate these fiscal constraints, CACC implemented some necessary adjustments effective **November 1, 2024**.

To begin, we updated our intake hours to 3pm to 7pm daily to allow us to focus our resources more efficiently while continuing to provide high-quality care for the animals. Importantly, our viewing hours remain unaffected, as we are still open to the public from **12 PM to 7 PM** for adoptions and pet reunifications.

Furthermore, starting **November 1**, CACC is asking Chicago Residents to leave healthy outdoor cats where they are. The current practice of admitting healthy, community cats is an outdated modality and often fails to service the public or the goal of advancing animal welfare for cats and each community. This decision was based on research indicating that cats thriving in their

natural environments are often better left where they are. In fact, lost cats are **13 times more likely to return home** if they remain in their familiar areas. Conversely, less than **2% of cats** brought to shelters are reclaimed by their owners. By prioritizing animals that truly need our help—those that are sick or injured—we can better serve our community's needs.

Throughout our operations, we continue to emphasize the profound **human-animal bond** that enriches the lives of Chicago residents. Animals are deeply ingrained in our communities, and we recognize the importance of these connections. CACC is also committed to implementing our **racial equity goals**, by engaging communities to hear about their relationship with animals and supporting those pet owners with resources to thrive, ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone in our diverse city.

We are committed to supporting survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence by recognizing the critical bond between survivors and their pets. As a member of the 17th District Domestic Violence Committee and a partner in community initiatives like those in Little Village, CACC works closely with agencies such as DFSS and their delegate partners to ensure survivors can transition to safety without leaving their pets behind. By offering resources and collaboration, CACC is dedicated to helping survivors achieve independence and stability during times of crisis.

I want to take a moment to express our gratitude to everyone who shares our social media posts and helps promote CACC as a place with amazing animals available for adoption. With over **2,000 more strays, owner surrenders, and confiscates** this year compared to last, your support means the world to us. Together, we're making a difference!

CACC will continue collaborating closely with our rescue partners and the community to ensure that all animals receive the necessary support. We also emphasize the importance of responsible pet ownership in reducing shelter intake, including spaying/neutering and ensuring pets are properly identified. While these required changes may have raised some concerns, I assure you that our commitment to animal care remains strong. We encourage the public to consider adopting or fostering animals, which will help reduce intake needs and give more pets the chance to find loving homes.

Your support and understanding during this transitional period are crucial as we continue to work toward a brighter future for all animals in our care. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.