

CITY OF CHICAGO – Chicago Public Library

2025 Budget Hearing – November 8, 2022

Christopher Brown, Commissioner

Good morning, Chairman Ervin, Vice Chair Lee, Mayor Brandon Johnson, and esteemed City Council members. Chicago Public Library (CPL) embodies what a city can achieve when it invests in knowledge, equity, and community. Your continued support empowers CPL to be a powerful connector, bringing vital resources and opportunities to all Chicagoans.

For over 150 years, CPL has been more than a library—it has been a place of learning, growth, and connection. With 81 branches across all 77 neighborhoods and a collection exceeding 6 million items, we provide pathways for every resident. Our delivery service extends these resources to every corner of Chicago, reinforcing CPL's role as a key equity connector.

CPL serves as a bridge to essential services. Through our partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health, we have distributed thousands of resources, from Narcan to hygiene kits through high-use health vending machines. We combat food insecurity by delivering meals in collaboration with the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Our libraries host job fairs, mental and behavioral health support, community murals, and more, anchoring neighborhoods with stability and hope. Most recently, we have expanded mental and behavioral health services at Legler Regional Library, and four other neighborhood libraries, meeting the needs of Chicagoans.

CPL is on pace to record more than 70 million touchpoints, including over 5 million in-person visits and nearly 8 million checkouts. Program attendance surged by 42, and we delivered over 35,000 tutoring sessions—an increase of 23 percent from the previous year. As one parent put it, "Finally, math homework without the tears." Our YOUmedia spaces engaged nearly 20,000 teens, inspiring creativity and learning. Through One Summer Chicago, we provided hundreds of job and volunteer opportunities, and next year, every library branch will employ at least two youth. We also celebrated cultural diversity through exhibits like Pilsen Days, honoring the Mexican heritage of Chicago.

In 2025, we will deepen our focus on youth engagement. Our 81 Club partnership with Chicago Public Schools continues to break barriers, granting library access to all students and teachers. This initiative has already increased library cardholders among students in economically disadvantaged communities by 63 percent and among English language learners by 81 percent.

CPL's commitment to diversity is strong--over 60 percent of our staff are people of color, outpacing industry benchmarks for Black and Hispanic representation. Our investment in non-English materials has doubled since 2021.

CPL is more than books; it is a cornerstone of opportunity and resilience. With your continued support, we will remain a force for growth, connection, and hope in Chicago. Together, we will create a city where every resident can thrive. Thank you.

