

**Testimony at to the Cook County Health and Hospitals Systems Board  
Meeting on 9/1/17  
From: Wesley Epplin  
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Health & Medicine Policy Research Group**

Hello, my name is Wesley Epplin and I serve as the Director of Health Equity at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, a nonprofit think tank focused on advancing health equity in Illinois.

I'm returning to speak on an issue that Health & Medicine and others have brought to your attention several times over the last few months: Ensuring that the health system's hospitals and clinics are welcoming and affirming spaces that are truly safe for all patients who come through your doors.

I appreciate the serious consideration, time, and efforts given by board members who served on the board task force focused on this issue, and those who are supportive of positive action. We're hopeful that swift action to ensure that the health system is welcoming and safe for all will be taken following Dr. Shannon's report today.

As a member of the Public Health Woke coalition, Health & Medicine repeats the demands that we've made before. I will read them again here:

1. **Place clear signage.** Place abundant and clear signage in multiple languages assuring a welcoming institution.
2. **Provide staff training.** Staff training & resources addressing needs of marginalized patients & families.
3. **Implement a legal referrals system.** Establish referral systems for legal services, know-your-rights information, & other necessary resources.
4. **Strengthen internal policies and procedures.** Clarify, revise, & strengthen policies & procedures that focus on protecting immigrant & marginalized patients.
5. **Monitor community stress.** Identify and monitor indicators & neighborhood stress in immigrant & marginalized communities.
6. **Ensure best practices for patients facing increased stress and trauma.** Design & implement best practices for clinical & public health providers to deliver appropriate care.

Last week, the Twitter page for the health system tweeted that the organization's quote, "180 y(ea)r mission to care for all regardless of ability to pay or immigration status remains strong!"

Health & Medicine is one of the region's biggest supporters of this institution and we want to ensure your success of achieving this mission. We appreciate that the health system has made some recent changes on social media with an emphasis that "all are welcome here". I replied at that time and say again today, the six demands we are making work toward that mission.

In fact, action on this front is mission-critical. Relevant here: Today, the President may be undoing DACA, an assault on immigrants. In context, this follows his other disgusting statements of vitriol and indifference to hate that harms nearly every marginalized community in the United States.

Both the actions and threats of Immigration Enforcement should also prompt action from this institution. There is no room to wait, as our neighbors need your help.

The proud tradition and mission of serving all who come to the Cook County Health & Hospital System demands action right now. Meet our six demands to make this a welcoming, safe, and affirming institution for all! Thank you.