

# **Statement from Clerk Orr** **Regarding** **the Assessment Process**

*Below is a statement by Cook County Clerk David Orr given to Cook County Commissioners yesterday afternoon in lieu of today's hearing with Cook County Assessor Joseph Berrios.*

July 18, 2017

Dear Commissioners,

I am very concerned that the problems with the assessment process have not been corrected. In 2015, Assessor Berrios, while announcing a new assessment model, stated that the assessment system was regressive. Regressivity hurts low and middle income residents the most-putting them on the hook for a larger property tax bill than they should be paying. We have now learned that the new model, which was created to address regressivity, was never-or only partially-implemented.

The Cook County Clerk's Office is an integral part of the property tax system and we rely on accurate and fair assessments from the County Assessor's Office to determine property tax rates.

I am aware that Assessor Berrios and President Preckwinkle are looking for experts to bring solutions and transparency to the assessment process. Still, two questions must be asked: (1) why is the Assessor's Office not using the model that, in 2015, they publicly touted would significantly alleviate this problem and, (2) what assessment model is the office currently using?

Three substantive studies have already been conducted: a 2011 study by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; a University of Chicago analysis commissioned by the Assessor in 2014 and funded by the MacArthur Foundation; and the Chicago Tribune investigation. Clearly, there is a crisis to solve and we must begin-as you are today-by speaking with the experts that have already spent countless hours studying the assessment process and developing stronger models.

If the choice is to move forward with an expert to offer solutions to the assessment system, then the selection process cannot be conducted behind closed doors. My office, and the other Cook County offices that administer the property tax system, must be involved. We need all hands on deck to assure the public that the property tax system is fair and transparent. Finally, any study of the crisis we face must be conducted with all deliberate speed.

The assessment process is complex. However, there has been a lack of transparency from the Assessor's Office. The public cannot afford any delay in implementing real solutions.

David Orr  
Cook County Clerk