COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER BRIDGET GAINER
HOSTING A PUBLIC HEARING ON YOUTH JOBLESSNESS

NOTHING STOPS A BULLET LIKE A JOB

MARCH 22ND, 2016 @ 11:45AM
118 N CLARK ST • COOK COUNTY BOARD ROOM, 5TH FL

Join in on a dialogue between County Commissioners, Youth & Key Organizers

85% Hispanic Teen Year Round Joblessness in Chicago

NEARLY HALF Of All Young Black Men Are Jobless & Out of School In Chicago

88% Black Teen Year Round Joblessness in Chicago

Presented By:

Chicago Urban League
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Chicago Area Project
Strengthening neighborhoods Helping young people

Westside Health Authority
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m metropolitan family services

Alternative Schools Network
Creating Futures Everyday

Black United Fund

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Links to TV and Radio News Coverage from March 22, 2016
Youth Employment Hearing at the Cook County Board Room

- WBEZ 91.5 Chicago - [http://bit.ly/1VOam3c](http://bit.ly/1VOam3c)

Full video coverage of the hearing click on the link below:
Brown: Why not try fighting violence with jobs?

By Mark Brown

Quiwana Bell, who runs a social service agency in the Austin neighborhood, caught the news about the Belgium terrorist attacks before heading downtown Tuesday to testify at a hearing into the need for more summer jobs for young people.

At that point, the death toll in Brussels was at 26, and the awful reality of the violent deaths tugged at Bell as it did at most of us.

But there was another feeling edging in there that couldn’t be denied as she watched the wall-to-wall television coverage on CNN.

And when Bell got her turn at the microphone, she chose to put it out there.

“That’s tragic,” she said of those who died in Brussels at the terrorists’ hands, “But when you talk about a 7-year-old who just got shot it’s kind of normal, and we just kind of [say] ‘Oh, wow, that’s awful,’ and we keep on going, you know. We’re better than that. And there’s something to be done.”

She said it in a soft voice that shook ever so slightly with emotion that comes from working first hand with the effects of the violence on Chicago’s West Side — and with the young men who are both its perpetrators and primary victims.

I’m sure there were many other Chicagoans who thought something similar as Bell: that for some reason homicide one-at-a-time is regarded as less serious a national crisis than these mass terrorist killings.

“It’s bewildering to us, because we see our people dying on the streets every day, and the care and concern doesn’t seem to be there,” Bell told me later.

Perhaps the reason is that too many of us imagine ourselves immune from the one and vulnerable to the other, or maybe it’s because we think we can get the upper hand on the terrorists but have no answer for the killings committed by our own.

I don’t pretend to have the answers.

By Mark Brown

Quiwana Bell, chief operating officer of Westside Health Authority, and Jessie Dunkin, a product of the agency’s employment training program, after testifying Tuesday about the need for more funding for summer youth jobs. | Mark Brown/Sun-Times

But the people testifying Tuesday before the Cook County Board of Commissioners believe expanding summer jobs programs would be a big help.

“That’s why we had their parents have,” said Bell, chief operating officer of Westside Health Authority. “It’s an epidemic. It’s not just black youth either.”

An earlier speaker, Father Dave Kelly of Precious Blood Ministries in Back of the Yards, said the question he hears most often is: “Hey, Father. Can you help me get a job?”

Bell agreed.

“I hear that at least 40 times a day,” she said. “It’s just unbelievable.”

Bell fears what the future holds for her Austin neighborhood as the unemployed 20-somethings of today become the 30-somethings of tomorrow.

“If you don’t have a job at 21, where the hell you going to be at 30?” she said. “We have to get them at this age and get them set up for something, because right now they’re set up for nothing.”

If you could reduce terrorism with something as simple as a jobs program, wouldn’t you do it?
Youth unemployment stings south suburbs far worse than north

By Alexia Elejalde-Ruiz
Contact Reporters

Disturbing unemployment trends among Chicago youth are mirrored in some Cook County suburbs, including a stark north-south divide.

Nearly 40 percent of black 20- to 24-year-olds were both out of school and out of work in Cook County in 2014, compared with 15 percent of Hispanics and 8 percent of whites in those age groups, according to a report released Tuesday by the Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The numbers are particularly troubling for young black men, 45 percent of whom were neither working nor in school in Cook County, compared to with 17.7 percent of Latino men and 9.1 percent of white men, the report found.

That’s far worse than the national average of 32.1 percent for black men in that age group, as well as what was found in New York City, Los Angeles County and Harris County, which includes Houston, according to the report.

The statistics echo Chicago data released in January by the institute that showed 47 percent of black men in their early 20s are neither in school nor working.

The report was prepared for a hearing Tuesday before the Cook County Board’s Workforce, Housing and Community Development Committee that will include testimony by young people.

Cook County Commissioner Bridget Gainer, D-Chicago, said she called for the hearing because she was struck by the January report for Chicago that showed the areas with highest youth unemployment also were experiencing the most violence.

The intent is to get the information in front of county lawmakers as they plan their next budget and to get an update on the summer jobs plan from the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, which administers federal funds for such programs.

“This has been a very difficult year for us in Chicago, and as we approach the summer, are we adequately prepared to provide jobs for young people?” she said. “We’d rather (look at) that in March than July.”

Karin Norington-Reaves, CEO of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, told the commissioners that her organization’s funding “allows us to barely make a dent.”

The partnership’s current budget is just under $60 million, about half of it federal funding and the rest from private donors and foundations. She said there are about 200,000 disconnected youth in Chicago and it costs about $4,500 to serve each young person, services that include preparing youth for jobs.

The federal money is limited to year-round programming, so the partnership does not have a large-scale summer program, Norington-Reaves said.

The One Summer Chicago program administered by the city expects to employ about 25,000 young people this summer, said Mary Ellen Messner, deputy commissioner of youth services at the city’s Department of Family and Support Services. There were 66,000 applicants last year.

The department, which has 163 private employer partners, has also applied for a $2 million federal grant to put 300 more out-of-work and out-of-school youth into summer jobs, with the intent it would become year-round employment, Messner said.

Like in Chicago, Cook County youth unemployment statistics show great disparities between communities to the north and south.

A cluster of suburbs in southern Cook County had the greatest concentration of out-of-work youth, with Harvey, Markham, Hazel Crest, Sauk Village and Ford Heights showing joblessness rates of over 60 percent for 20- to 24-year-olds.

By contrast, a cluster of northwest suburbs showed low joblessness rates of 30 percent or less among 20 to 24-year-olds, including Palatine, Inverness, Schaumburg, Arlington Heights, Elk Grove Village, Streamwood, Hoffman Estates, Mount Prospect and Wheeling.

The joblessness rate includes people who may be in school.
Joblessness is concentrated in “economically abandoned sectors of Cook County resulting from deindustrialization,” the authors write in the report, and reflect “the long-term impacts of 40 years of economic decisions by portions of the private sector seeking to be more competitive in the global market.”

The hardest-hit areas seem to be those that most relied on manufacturing jobs, study co-author Teresa Cordova said.

“The strategy of bringing back jobs is also bringing back these areas that have really suffered as manufacturing left,” she said.

While Cook County’s black youth showed the worst employment rates compared with blacks in the other localities in the study, Latinos and whites fared better in Cook County than the comparison regions.

For example, 12 percent of Latino 20- to 24-year-olds in Cook County were out of school and out of work, better than the 15.2 percent national average for Latinos, 19 percent in New York City and 14 percent in both Los Angeles and Harris County.

Cordova said further study needs to look at the types of jobs and incomes people are getting, as previous research has shown Latinos make up a lot of the working poor.

In addition to summer jobs, the report points to criminal justice reform, apprenticeships, incentives to bring anchor employment centers to disinvested neighborhoods, and small business incubators within neighborhoods as strategies to combat youth unemployment.

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An earlier version of this article included incorrect jobless percentages in the second paragraph. The figures have been corrected.

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Advocates Raise Alarm On Youth Unemployment in Cook County Hearing

File under: Cook County, Craig Dellimore, youth employment

Click the following link to listen to WBBM 780’s Craig Dellimore from March 22, 2016 - [http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2016/03/22/advocates-raise-alarm-on-youth-unemployment-in-cook-county-hearing/](http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2016/03/22/advocates-raise-alarm-on-youth-unemployment-in-cook-county-hearing/)

(CBS) — A Cook County Board hearing is raising the alarm about youth unemployment in the region. Simply put, it’s bad, and getting worse, reports WBBM Political Editor Craig Dellimore.

Quiwana Bell of the Westside Health Authority said simply there are not enough jobs for African-American and Latino young people who want and need them.

“Especially for some communities that have upwards of 30 percent of their population are these young people who are doing absolutely nothing and it’s taking a toll on our communities in major ways,” Bell said.

Fr. Michael Pfleger whose St. Sabina Church is in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood said there is a direct line between youth unemployment and crime.

“We can’t keep just telling people our youth don’t sell drugs, put down the guns, be nice people and not offer them anything to pick up or to do with their lives,” Pfleger said.

County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said a solution sounds simple. She said federal dollars allocated to summer youth employment are needed as well as adding to existing funds to the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. But gridlock in Washington and Springfield stand in the way.
Youth joblessness was the focus of a Cook County hearing Tuesday afternoon, during which experts called attention to the grim employment landscape faced by many young people in the region, particularly youth of color.

The hearing coincided with the release of a new report on Cook County youth unemployment from the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute. Youth in Cook County are less likely to be employed than their counterparts at the state and national levels and in other major U.S. regions, the research suggests.

The employment situation is the worst for Cook County’s black youth, according to the report, based on 2014 data.

“[Young] blacks in Cook County do worse than they do compared to Illinois, the United States and the counties that hold that nation’s largest cities,” UIC Great Cities Director Teresa Cordova told Progress Illinois. “Conversely, whites do better.”

The findings, she added, indicate that youth unemployment in Cook County is a “persistent problem” that it “is very concentrated” and will require a “multi-pronged attack from every facet to really tackle.”

“We think this is the outcome of 40 years of economic policies,” she said. “This didn’t just happen overnight. But we also can’t continue to let it happen, because the impacts are incredibly severe.”

The hearing was held by Cook County’s Workforce, Housing and Community Development committee, chaired by Commissioner Bridget Gainer (D-10).

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle spoke briefly at the hearing.

“This report supports what we already know,” she said. “Far too many of our young people are cast adrift with little or no hope.

Too many are not only without educational opportunity, but without employment as well.”

Preckwinkle said the county has “made strides in helping youth find opportunities,” citing youth summer job initiatives at the forest preserve and sheriff’s office along with the One Summer Chicago Plus youth employment program.

“But that’s not enough,” she stressed. “We need federal dollars specifically (allocated) to summer youth employment, and we need to augment the existing funds that flow to the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership for its youth programming. Equally important, we have to encourage the business community to invest in our youth by providing summer work experiences as well as full-time employment that becomes the foundation for lifelong learning and career development.”

Preckwinkle mentioned the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, which formed in 2012 and serves over 4,000 youth aged 16 to 24 in Chicago and the Cook County suburbs. The partnership’s nearly $60 million budget...
comes mostly from federal funding and allocates about $16 million to youth efforts, said Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership CEO Karin Norington-Reaves. “We recognize that there’s a crisis in our region with respect to the number of youth and young adults who are neither connected to education or employment,” she said, putting the total number of such youths in the region at over 200,000. “We also recognize that while our budget sounds hefty, it allows us to barely make a dent in the true need that exists within our county.”

The UIC report compared Cook County with the United States, Illinois, New York City, Los Angeles County and Harris County, Texas.

Cook County had the highest share of 16- to 19-year-olds being both out of school and work, at 8.8 percent.

Fifty-nine percent of blacks aged 20 to 24 in Cook County were unemployed in 2014, compared to 58 percent in Illinois and 49 percent nationwide.

For blacks aged 16 to 19, the 2014 unemployment rate in Cook County was 87 percent, followed by 78 percent among Latinos and 74 percent among whites.

Father Michael Pfleger, pastor of the Faith Community of Saint Sabina, testified at the hearing. He pointed to Chicago’s uptick in gun violence as he stressed the need for more youth employment opportunities.

“As of today, 82 days into this year -- 82 days -- 118 people killed by guns, 593 wounded,” he said. “It’s time we draw the dots and acknowledged that there is a cause and effect. We can’t keep just telling our youth don’t sell drugs, put down the guns, be nice people and not offer them anything to pick up or do with their lives.”

Summer job opportunities helped put David Elam’s life on a positive path.

The 25-year-old former gang member from Garfield Park previously “saw fit to be a part of nothing but destruction,” he told commissioners. His life has since turned around thanks to youth employment and mentoring programs. Elam is currently a youth mentor on the city’s West Side with the group Fathers Who Care.

“Without these (youth jobs and mentoring) programs,” Elam said, “I’ll just flat-out say it. I’d be dead right now.”

Youth jobs, particularly those offered over the summer, are crucial, Elam said. They provide young people with “a sense of urgency and responsibility, to be able to have something positive to do and not be caught up in all the negativity that’s been happening in the city of Chicago,” he told Progress Illinois.

Just over 20 percent of Cook County’s youth aged 16 to 19 were employed in 2014, compared with 29.1 percent in Illinois and 29.4 percent nationwide, according to the UIC report. The 2014 employment rates among Cook County’s 16- to 19-year-olds break down to be 12.9 percent for Blacks, 21.6 percent for Hispanic and 26.2 percent for whites.

Over 62 percent of youth in Cook County aged 20 to 24 were employed in 2014, compared with 64.5 percent nationwide and 65.8 percent in Illinois.

Those figures come during the ninth month of the state budget impasse, during which various social services, including youth programs, have gone unfunded.

“The state budget [impasse] has been devastating (for) human services across the board, but it’s particularly devastating for young folks and organizations” serving them, Chicago Area Project Executive Director David Whittaker said in an interview.

Whittaker, whose organization works to prevent juvenile delinquency in disadvantaged communities, called for a state budget solution and urged Illinois officials to “reestablish (the state’s) commitment to funding youth services.”

During his testimony, Pfleger said Illinois has not done enough to help address Cook County’s high rate of youth unemployment.

“The state has turned its back on this problem,” he claimed.

Cook County Commissioner Jesus “Chuy” Garcia (D-7) suggested that local decision makers should think big in terms of how to tackle the region’s youth joblessness problem. Garcia, a supporter of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, mentioned the $5.5 billion youth employment proposal, the Employ Young Americans Now Act, being sponsored by Sanders in the U.S. Senate.