



RAYMOND A. LOPEZ

Alderman, 15th Ward

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July 26, 2023

Hon. Brandon Johnson, Mayor
City of Chicago
121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Re: Ongoing Migrant Shelter/Center Issues

Mayor Johnson:

It is with great concern that I write to you regarding the situations unfolding at centers and shelters serving the migrant asylum-seeking populations currently within the City of Chicago.

Across this city, communities have been asked or told that they were going to be welcoming individuals shipped here from across the country. The compassion of our communities can unite us as a city during this episode in our history and ultimately makes us stronger. But first, we must acknowledge where we find ourselves in this moment.

There are approximately 5,500 migrant asylum-seekers currently in the City of Chicago's shelter system. 1,400 are children. Nearly 2,300 single men and women are residing at locations in the South Loop, Douglas, Gage Park and Woodlawn communities. 860 individuals are currently residing in police districts across the city.

Over the past several months, there has been a significant uptick in illicit and illegal activities at all locations that warrants your immediate attention and action. Reports of migrant asylum-seekers participating in drug sales and usage, male & female prostitution and associated human trafficking, as well as gang recruitment have been witnessed by law enforcement and community alike.

Additionally, the level of disrespectful behavior towards Chicago residents by the migrant asylum-seekers is reaching a boiling point at locations where migrants joyfully ignore curfew, alcohol consumption, and other restrictions put in place at shelters for the benefit of those housed as well as the community. Migrant asylum-seekers are now using their vehicles to block streets, perform sex acts, and otherwise disrupt life in communities where this behavior wasn't the norm. To make matters worse, residents now feel that their only recourse is to take action against the migrant asylum-seekers. This is not the time for vigilantism – it is the time for you to step up and act.

Action by your administration requires that you loudly and forcefully declare our communities welcoming to those here but intolerant to the behaviors that will damage the communities we have asked to bare the burden this humanitarian crisis has created. I can think of no greater opportunity for you to lead than by addressing the rampant heroin problem exploding within the shelter populations. Rather than prohibit this behavior, the Chicago Department of Public Health is willfully encouraging it by ensuring doses of Narcan (Naloxone) are available at all locations to avoid future opioid overdoses. This policy alone will create a plethora of opioid dens across the city which your administration will be directly responsible for allowing.

Above all the issues presented, the one most concerning to me is the possibility of gang recruitment locally and the eventuality of a new gang born of those we have warehoused without resources left to their own devices. During the 1980's, Los Angeles had an influx of South American asylum-seekers. After the federal government refused to grant their merit status, those migrants were considered undocumented residents within Los Angeles. Then, as now, the asylum-seekers evolved from clusters of people living together to roaming packs doing whatever possible to survive, including selling drugs and human trafficking. We know what the Los Angeles gang ultimately evolved into: Mara Salvatrucha, the MS-13.

Now is not the time to allow our emotions to dominate the conversation about how best to proceed. We must recognize the facts, all the facts, this humanitarian crisis has created for both the migrant asylum-seekers and the native Chicagoans carrying this burden. Our faith commands us to help those in need just as it demands we separate the evil from the good.

Until then I remain,

Respectfully Serving the 15th Ward



RAYMOND A. LOPEZ
Alderman – City of Chicago