

Press Release: Foxx breaks settlement agreement and forces lawsuit!



Despite commitments to work collaboratively from senior officials within Foxx's Office our efforts have instead been stonewalled at every turn.

Just like the typical Cook County politician she is not interested in real transparency and true oversight.

Our previous lawsuit resulted in a settlement in 2017 in which Foxx's senior staff promised unprecedented levels of cooperation and transparency. They committed to working with the Chicago Justice Project to make their felony prosecution data available to us moving forward and even offered to help us draft future requests.

In the subsequent years no such cooperation has been forthcoming - in fact all we have received are the same contrived denials that the Office has been issuing for years.

Nothing has changed.

The Office is now going to such lengths to hide their data they are now telling the Chicago Justice Project that they do not have any information within their files detailing our agreement. They also refuse to discuss the matter with two people within their Office that were in the room at the time the agreement was made and that they have acknowledged are still employed by the Office.

Our fight to bring transparency to the Office has entered its second decade!

As part of the settlement the Office turned over a dataset made up of 7 years of felony prosecution. Instead of obeying the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) they released the data in a proprietary format resulting in the Chicago Justice Project not being able to have confidence that the data was extracted appropriately. The FOIA law requires public bodies to release data in a format that is accessible as possible. The Cook County State's Attorney's Office told us their multi-million-dollar Microsoft database does not export in any other format.

Complete fiction!

In our discussions with the Office earlier this year Matthew Saniie, Chief Data Officer, stated that the Crimes database that stores their felony prosecution data is made up of 700 tables and 7,000 fields. This contrasts greatly with the 5 tables and 141 fields they make available on their website. Also, they admitted to us that they purposely removed fields identifying the prosecutors and police officers involved in each case before putting any data online. So much for being able to identify bad actors within the system.

Despite this fact they told the Chicago Justice Project we are going to have to live with what they make available on their website and that they are not under an obligation to make any more data available to the public.

For the data they released through FOIA they supplied - 453 tables or just 65% of the total tables they maintain - 5,220 fields or just 75% of the total tables they maintain. Of the fields they supplied 2,196 or 42% of those fields were empty. They have refused to answer why tables and fields were apparently purposely withheld and why such a high percentage of the fields they did supply are blank despite committing to working with Chicago Justice Project on this very issue in our settlement agreement.

Due to the absolute refusal to honor their obligations under Illinois's Freedom of Information Act and for breaching our settlement agreement the Chicago Justice Project has filed a multi-count complaint in Cook County Circuit Court to force open the Cook County State's Attorney's Office's data once and for all.

Chicago Justice Project will be holding a press conference to announce the filing of our multi-count lawsuit in state court. Tracy Siska, Executive Director of the Chicago Justice Project and Michael Geller from the global law firm of DLA Piper will be available to answer your questions about the lawsuit. The press conference will be hosted through Zoom.

A robust timeline of our engagement with the SAO as well as a copy of the complaint and exhibits will be available on our website at this link which will go live @ 8:00am (CT) today.

Link: <https://chicagojustice.org/2020/10/21/cook-county-foia-lawsuit-transparency/>

Press Conference Details

Date: Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020

Time: 10:30 AM

Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81708735671?pwd=SFhWWmhhN1JUM1NhR3NEaEtmNWU4UT09>

The press conference will be streamed live on the Chicago Justice Project's Facebook [page](#) and YouTube [channel](#).

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