



LAW ENFORCEMENT IS NOT A SICKNESS— IT'S A LIFELINE

By Kankakee County Sheriff Mike Downey, 2nd Vice President, Illinois Sheriffs' Association Executive Board

As Sheriff, I've stood shoulder to shoulder with deputies and officers who risk their lives daily to protect our communities. **That's why I was deeply troubled to hear Mayor Brandon Johnson refer to law enforcement as a "sickness."** Those words are not only reckless and insulting—they're dangerous.

Law enforcement officers are not a disease. They are the men and women who answer the call in the middle of the night, who stand in harm's way so others don't have to, and who carry the burden of protecting people they may never even know. **They are parents, siblings, neighbors, and friends who put on a uniform and a badge knowing full well the risks that come with it.**

At a time when Chicago is facing an undeniable public safety crisis, the last thing we need is rhetoric that vilifies the very people sworn to keep the peace. Carjackings, shootings, and violent crime continue to harm families across the country with Chicago continuing to lead the way. **When the mayor chooses to attack law enforcement instead of working with us, it doesn't just hurt morale—it emboldens criminals and makes communities less safe.**

According to various reports, Mayor Johnson's security detail is made up of anywhere from 100-150 CPD officers. **If law enforcement is a "sickness" as Mayor Johnson claims it is, I challenge him to put the 100-150 CPD officers back on the street and work and travel around the city, state and country without a security detail.**

I won't stand by silently when the sacrifices of my deputies, or any officer, are dismissed so casually. Policing, like any profession including yours, is not perfect. We can and should always strive for accountability, improvement, and stronger partnerships with the public. But there is a vast difference between pursuing reform and condemning an entire profession as a "sickness." That type of language deepens division instead of creating solutions.



Words from leadership matter. They affect recruitment at a time when police departments are already struggling to fill ranks. They undermine trust at a time when cooperation between the public and law enforcement is more critical than ever. And they send a dangerous message to criminals that those enforcing the law don't have the backing of their city's leaders.

As Sheriff, I can tell you this: the men and women in law enforcement will continue to show up, no matter what names we are called. We will continue to run toward danger when others run away. We will continue to defend the innocent, uphold the law, and serve with honor.

But make no mistake—police officers are not a “sickness.” They are a lifeline. They are the thin line between chaos and safety. And they deserve respect, not ridicule.

Chicago, and every community across this state, deserves leadership that strengthens public safety, not rhetoric that tears it down. **Until that happens, law enforcement will remain committed to protecting and serving—because that is who we are, no matter what anyone says.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael J. Downey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" at the end.