



## **Statement from Bilqis Jacobs-El, Director, Facilities Management Bureau of Asset Management**

*Statement to the Cook County Board of Commissioners on August 3, 2016,  
explaining their awards from the National Association of Counties (NACO)*

Thank you to President Preckwinkle and the Board of Commissioners for allowing this time to recognize the NACO Awards received by the Cook County Department of Facilities Management in the areas of the pre-apprentice youth program and overtime reduction.

It is almost one year ago that we stood before the Workforce Committee headed by Commissioner Gainer seeking approval to expose youth at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center to skilled trades. There are several stakeholders and key collaborators that have made the program possible. Thank you Superintendent Dixon, Executive Director Philippe Magloire, and all leadership at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Painters' District Council Local #14, Chicago Public Schools/Principal Berry Shingles of Nancy B. Jefferson School, the Dawson Skill Center and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership.

The pre-apprentice program came to life by hearing the children and listening to the children. The youth at the center typically ask our trades staff upon seeing them in the building, "how did you become an electrician, painter, carpenter, etc?" They wanted to know how the tradesmen got into their profession. We thought it would be great if we could show them. Starting this program has allowed us to present the children with new options for new opportunities, growth, resilience, and hopefully future training and a career.

Many of the children in our challenged and divested communities are trapped by what they perceived their options to be, little to none. For youth, exposure to skilled trades injects a positive path to a knowledge base they not thought of, or even been presented with. Because this program is a collaboration with Chicago Public Schools, the students receive credit towards high school upon completion. They also receive from the Painters Union, 3 credit days towards a painter's apprenticeship, if they are successful in applying and obtaining one.

It is fulfilling for us and an honor to work with the children. Special thanks to the Union Painters within DFM who have consistently stepped up to the plate to work with the children. The training could not exist without Foreman Bill Paulson, Melvin Barnes, Al Baraza, Sylvia Deal and support from Foreman Regina Wagner. Thank you DFMs Susan Lombard for support services and logistics management.

In listening to the children, they always mention how great it would be to have skilled trades and training programs in their communities. They have returned to their schools with a vocation and greater options for knowledge that will allow for fortified and sustainable futures.

Thank you.