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Alderman Hadden's Statement on the 2025 Budget Vote

Today, we were asked to vote on Mayor Johnson's 4th budget proposal for 2025. I voted yes. What passed City Council today drastically differs from what the mayor originally unveiled in November. I voted yes because after months of chaos and disorganization from the Johnson administration, Chicago was facing a downgrade in our credit rating and a potential shutdown had the process continued to go unresolved. A government shutdown would exacerbate the chaos and disproportionately impact our most vulnerable and low-income neighborhoods. It is unacceptable that Mayor Johnson allowed the budget to get to this precarious place in the first place, and I am committed to working with my colleagues next year to ensure that we do not face a similar situation.

This latest proposal eliminates the property tax increase by making some reductions in middle management positions across departments but also by employing more one-time, non-structural solutions than the last proposal. City budgets are the product of imperfect processes and tough choices. I've never seen a budget proposal that I would call great or that I was excited to support. This one is no different. And while this proposal may have landed at a result that - on its face - appears to respond to what constituents have asked us for, it's really just delaying harder choices for a few months. **But this is the budget that could pass in time to avoid a government shutdown.**

That being said, I still have grave concerns about the 2025 budget. I do not believe that the budget passed today positions our city for long-term financial stability and instead relies too heavily on one-time, short-term fixes. I have concerns that this administration is repeating the same mistake of kicking the can down the road that Mayor Johnson admonished in his budget address.

We've heard a lot about Mayor Johnson's progressive values throughout this process. And I don't doubt them, but **HOW we do things is just as important as WHAT we do.** And the way he's led this process has left the City Council fractured, Chicagoans less trusting in government, and our City in an extremely vulnerable position as we enter the next year with the promise of attacks from the new presidential administration. We are not prepared and the fault lays squarely with him.

He delayed this process despite many voices telling him that it was a bad idea and leaving us less time to come together. Constantly changing budget hearing schedules made it hard to keep pace with the work in our wards and meant less time to engage our constituents in a transparent and accountable process around the budget. And when some of us expressed strong concerns about the direction of the Mayor's strategy, time and again we were rebuffed. We passed a budget today, but this delayed process has already caused much strife and threats to city services as contracts for delegate agencies whom we rely upon for the delivery of vital services are delayed. They don't get contracts until we appropriate the funds. We're going to feel the pain of this in the first quarter of 2025.

This budget may have progressive outcomes, but the process to get here was anything but progressive. The majority of the Council's Progressive Caucus, which I co-chair with Alder Vasquez, will be voting in support of this budget. And let me be clear that without our support, we would've had to recess again today without a vote. Our caucus' 19 members represent people from every corner of Chicago in all their diverse experiences and perspectives. **And we see many of our priorities reflected in this budget, no layoffs, investments in housing and homelessness, mental health and public safety.** We also will have a better, organized, more transparent process next year because we're also demanding that Council be given critical information that we rely upon in a timely manner.

To my colleagues who voted for this budget today - thank you for ensuring that bills will get paid, services will be delivered and that we have continuity of government.

To my colleagues who voted against this budget - thank you for so many of you engaging with us in good faith and working to make this better. Much of your feedback is reflected here as well.

To my colleagues who submitted a letter suggesting that we slash and burn the budget but never offered any amendments - best of luck on your crusade.